

The
REVOLT
AGAINST
BEAUTY

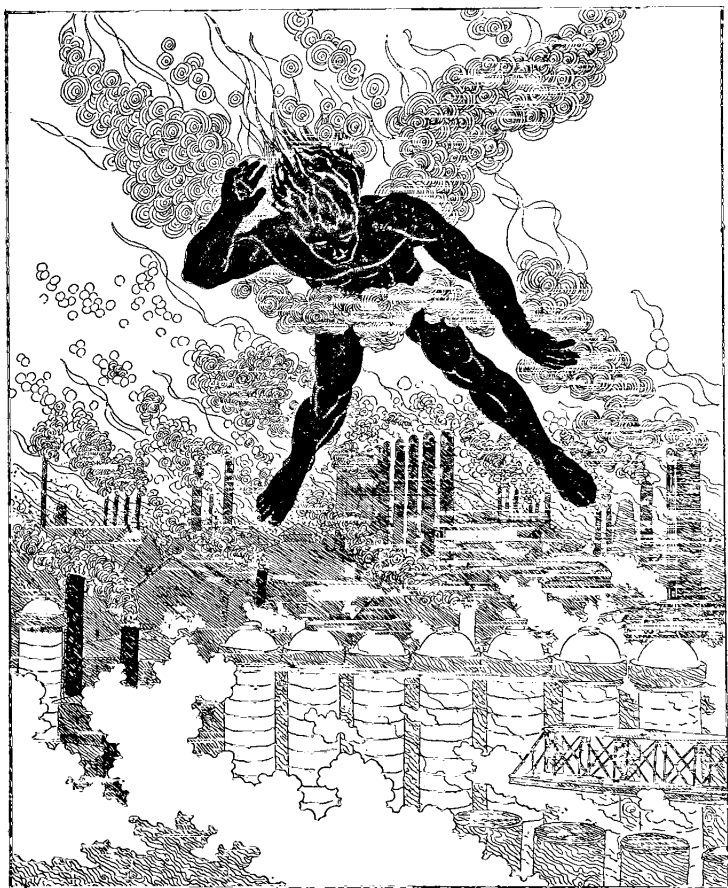


JOHN
HEMMING
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The Revolt Against Beauty



THE EVIL GENIUS OF UNCONTROLLED INDUSTRIALISM

The Revolt Against Beauty

The Source and Genesis of Modernistic Art

By

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(with Lilian Whiting)

Decorations by

FREDERICK RICHARDSON

"This is such a beautiful world!"

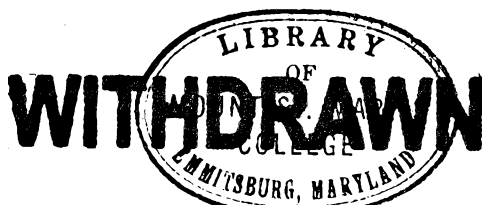
—Last words of Lady Hamilton.



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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To

THE COUNTESS MAXIMILIENNE D'HARCOURT

IN GRATITUDE FOR HER SYMPATHY
AND ENCOURAGEMENT THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

FOREWORD

ALL former civilizations have expressed their deepest and most profound aspirations and impulses of their souls in their art. The Greeks with the Parthenon, the Romans with their aspiration for power, the northern peoples with the Gothic. None of these races permitted the baser and degrading instincts of the human mind to dominate their art.

Can it be said that the present vogue of modernistic art is the expression of the American soul? If this be true, what is it we aspire to symbolize in our art? Ruskin maintains that quite the most reliable and truest record of a nation is written in its art.

Now, the modernist art propagandists claim that theirs is a true expression of the American soul.

It is the purpose of this essay to point out the falseness of that claim and to explain the true genesis of the neurosis that has cast its baleful spell over American esthetic culture.

Several books have appeared voicing a revolt against the monstrous pretensions and impudent audacity of the neurotic cults in painting, sculpture and architecture.

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But, while these works have often ably set forth the stupidity and unreason of the modernist movement in art, they have not penetrated to the fundamental origin of the movement, which lies deep in the hidden caves of the lower nature of Man.

I have attempted to uncover these hidden recesses and bring to the light of day the dark subterranean urge that inspires the creators as well as the sponsors of the modernist art cult.

No doubt many of the people so affected are unconscious of the meaning of this urge which attracts them in the works of Cézanne, Picasso and Matisse and their followers. But in the no distant future the normal people will awaken to the dread menace of a sadism that, under the hypocritical guise of modernist art, threatens the destruction of all esthetic culture in the West.

The poisonous philosophy of the modernist art cult is being taught in the schools and colleges in both America and England. Professors occupying chairs in the art departments of some of the leading colleges, as well as teachers and lecturers in the public schools and museums, are corrupting the minds of the young on a scale only surpassed by the evil done by the indecent movie racket. Fortunately the good sense of the American people has been aroused to abolish the evil of the movies. Let us hope that it may be

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awakened to banish from the land the degeneracy masquerading as modernist art.

The recent record of crimes observed in the newspapers shows a pronounced sadistic tone; the fiendish cruelty of abduction, the mutilation and murder of young girls indicate a sadistic revival in the criminal world parallel to the rise of sadism in modernistic art.

JOHN HEMMING FRY.

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CHAPTER I

1. *The Esthetic Urge in the Cosmos*

“Sea-Water, and all living below it,
Forests at the bottom of the sea—the branches and
leaves,
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and
seeds—the thick tangle, the openings, and the
pink turf,

“The change thence to the sight here, and to the
subtle air breathed by beings like us, who walk
this sphere;

The change onward from ours to that of beings
‘who walk other spheres.’”

—WALT WHITMAN: “Leaves of Grass.”

“O, sky above me! Thou pure! Thou deep!
Thou abyss of light! Gazing at thee, I quiver with
god-like desires.

“To cast myself up unto thy height—that is my
profundity! To hide myself in thy purity—that is
mine innocence!”

—NIETZSCHE.

TODAY, following a habit of mine formed some years ago, I visited the New York Aquarium at the Battery Park. For, in the Aquarium, if one has vision, one may view the primal gesture of the Eternal Energy expressing itself through matter.

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At first, hardly to be perceived and in cosmic silence, the tremendous drama of creation is staged. The first movement is born of the rhythm of the ocean. For there, bathed in the iridescent colors of transformed light, takes place the greatest of all mysteries: the evocation of form from the formless.

What is this form slowly emerging from chaos? It is living—and here Nature confides her greatest secret. What disposition will be made of this form? Will the creative cosmos forge it into rhythmic lines and balanced masses, or shape it in unbalance, disproportion and discord?

At this stage arises the question, what is the primal intent of the Creative Energy? There must be a choice. As evidenced from the very first, there are three main volitions of the creative cosmos: propagation, nutrition and that of determining the form of the new creation.

The evocation of form from the formless is the supreme manifestation of the creative cosmos. In the "Golden Legend" it is said that "God cannot exist but by creating." And the immense significance of this act of creation is that, through the normal volition of the cosmos, it must, in obedience to the inherent law of its being, issue in forms of beauty. To quote a German author: "Art, the eroticism of the all,

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creates out of chaos the plenitude of forms in the universe; and, just as there is no inherent beauty without form, without a law of nature, so also, there is no art without form; no artistic beauty *that does not conform to the laws of nature.*"

It is conceivable, then, that what we designate as Nature, is simply the power of the creative cosmos striving to utter and express itself through matter. This can only be done through the creation of form. Now, this creative process, whatever else it may be, is *esthetic*. Its expression, as involved in animal, plant and mineral life issues in forms of beauty; propagation and nutrition, are simply means to an end, that end being the creation of beauty.

The great naturalists, biologists, ethnologists, astronomers and philosophers, have been almost wholly blind to the presence of the esthetic factor in the universal plan. It is a mystery that men, with analytical minds and superior powers of reasoning, failed utterly to recognize the really most important factor in the riddle of the universe: the *esthetic motive* in the cosmic scheme, the cosmic volition ultimating in beauty.

I know of two naturalists who have sensed the esthetics of the cosmos. Ernest Haeckel in a measure discerned it, in his great classification of 4500 of the species biologists designate as Radio-

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laria. Then the Italian, Mackenzie, with his "Life and Esthetics of the Abysses," a work scarcely known in America, also divined it. This book is a great analytical survey of the very beginnings of the primal volition toward existence. The author follows the thousands of creatures that issue from this primal volition, clothed in beauty of form, a gigantic symphony of color. "Thousands of centuries have gone by," he declares, "since the moment, adventurous for us all, in which, for the first time, life appeared on the surface of the sea; and, since that fatal day, to date, the sea has remained for us the reservoir of the life of the world."

Then again: "In the ocean, there is an immense production of life and beauty. 'Here we find again a resemblance to the harmonies in the Hellenic myth of Aphrodite Anadyomene rising from the sea.'" After classifying and describing some of the innumerably beautiful forms created by the Cosmic Volition in the depths of the sea, the author continues: "Finally it has been noticed that certain Diffugia have an apparent preference for brilliant materials, colored glasses and similar things; and after all that has been said, it seems a legitimate deduction that, what we call the art of man, one of the highest manifestations of life, has had its hidden origin in the dark depths of the waters."

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From the life in the depths of the sea, in remotest periods, to the achievements in the art of Hellenic times, there is an uninterrupted ideal line; the esthetic law is everywhere manifest, and the art of man is an expression of this law; but not higher than marine prototypes for fundamental meaning. The original beauty of the abysses has flourished in the depths since the remotest times, and in it were contained, in potentiality, all future esthetic forms, thousands, perhaps millions, of years before man appeared to reflect them in his consciousness.

In the evolution of the lower forms of matter, through minerals, toward form, every stage is the gradual unfolding of a plan, of a design, purely esthetic and beautiful. So also in the formation of frost crystals and plant life, rising in the scale through animal life to man, does the ceaseless quest for beauty continue. The ever omniscient cosmos, in striving for form, becomes, then, the creator of beauty.

In his comprehensive work, "The Gate Beautiful," Mr. John Ward Stimson has analyzed and classified the orderly and esthetic development of the lowest forms of elementary life, up to the highest expressions of the esthetic cosmos in man:

"So now in a vast wave we shall behold the unfolding hand of heaven unroll its matchless

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wonders of form creation, from the humblest and most mysterious embryo up to the culminating triumph of persistent progress, in the upright and resplendent form of man. A marvelous and steady Transformation and Transmutation of expressive forms become revealed, fitting and adapting themselves to growing functions, yet ever based upon the germinal elements we have discovered, and dependent for artistic character upon their adjustments into esthetic language, from the esthetic alphabets and syllables employed.

“Within all we notice clearly the abstract ideal and conception latent—the germ of each special Divine Dream or poem. Then crystalline textures upholding and fixing the metrical and geometric and quantitative conditions of its lasting structure; then plastic and rhythmic Nutrition, Locomotion and Sensation, finding place and time for their development in order and sequence; then all resplendent display or significant textures and attractive colors, with deliberate and obvious study of decorative and artistic effects throughout! And lastly and always, appropriately with every form, color or function, the characteristic and organic attributes of mind and individuality which display the special intent and meaning of each life!

“Along the entire way up we notice the per-

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fect and steady advance of Life in quality and nobility of Form, Function and Spiritual implication—rising as a whole (and in the several stages) from Unity and Simplicity to Variety and Complexity; and from the harder and severer forms and textures seen in crystals, trees and limy sea-shells, up to lighter, more plastic, more refined and aspiring creations; attaining at length the humanely useful, domestic and docile intelligence of today. From blind or sluggish existence, each latent function, form and sense rises purified, practiced and perfected, for its splendid contribution to the final triumph of man,—the inner and unrevealed ever working itself outward to refulgent self-revelation, by friendly steps and by fellow laborers, up the Ladder of Life, up the mighty Stairway of the Temple of Art! The harder forms and severer tissues, which first preponderated and emphasized themselves for resistance or self-protection, give way gradually and melt into concealment or reserve before the lighter, kindlier, more plastic and radiant revelations of tissue, color and form.

“At last man himself bursts forth upon the ascending Tree-of-Life, a new but nobler manifestation of the divine ideal; dependent and developed by consistent inheritance along the magnificent progress that had gone before, and

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finding in self-consciousness and advancing Reason his power to utilize and ameliorate his conditions and civilizations."

This long quotation is excusable owing to the rich and warm inspiration of its author. It is evident from an analytical study of *natural* forms that nothing is created, through the *normal* volition of nature, that is ugly. True, many people describe as "ugly" certain animals which in reality are not ugly. For example, certain fishes and reptiles are offensive to many people from association with attributes of danger, or superstition, or impressions produced by comparison with higher forms of animal life. But the most offensive of toads and reptiles are formed on inherent principles of esthetics. They may be grotesque and uncanny as are the gargoyles on Nôtre Dame, but they are not ugly. The lower forms of life are constructed with an equilibrium of balanced masses and lines, entirely expressive of their essential character and evolving the tendency to rise to a higher type.

The ugly is never found in the normal creations of nature; it is found only in the *destructive negations* of disease, in the mutilation of the human figure by savages, and in some of the monstrosities of "modernistic" art. . . .

Along with the volition of the Cosmic Mind,

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it must be admitted, however, is ever present the element of negation, always hindering the full expression of cosmic intent, and issuing in disease and distortion; negating proportion and equilibrium in unbalanced masses, broken lines and ugly angles, a striving for the ideal ugliness. Set over against each other are these two powers: the one makes for the ideal beauty, the other for the ideal ugliness. Among civilized nations, the most complete development of the former ideal was realized by the ancient Greeks; the most intense negation of this ideal has been reached by the Americans, in cities like New York and Chicago.

The element of negation is always subordinate to the greater cosmic power—but it is always present.

Under the action of even the most favorable conditions, some of the living forms will be diseased. In the finest cornfield one may see, here and there, a stalk or an ear, distorted with rust or mildew. This is admirably illustrated in the mineral kingdom, by Ruskin, in his "Ethics of the Dust," where he makes a fine comparison of the cosmic instinct for form and its opposing negation:

"There seem to be in some crystals, from the beginning, an unconquerable purity of vital power, and strength of crystal spirit. Whatever

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dead substance, unacceptant of this energy, comes in the way, is either rejected, or forced to take some beautiful subordinate form; the purity of the crystal remains unsullied, and every atom of it bright with coherent energy. Then the second condition is, that from the beginning of its whole structure, a fine crystal seems to have determined that it will be of a certain size and of a certain shape; it persists in this plan, and completes it. Here is a perfect crystal of quartz for you. It is of an unusual form, and one which it might seem very difficult to build, a pyramid with convex sides, composed of other minor pyramids. But there is not a flaw in its contour throughout; not one of its myriads of component sides but is as bright as a jeweller's faceted work (and far finer, if you saw it close). The crystal points are as sharp as javelins; their edges will cut glass with a touch. Anything more resolute, consummate, determinate in form, cannot be conceived. Here, on the other hand, is a crystal of the same substance, in a perfectly simple type of form—a plain six-sided prism; but from its base to its point,—and it is nine inches long,—it has never for one instant made up its mind what thickness it will have. It seems to have begun by making itself as thick as it thought possible with the quantity of material at command. Still not being as thick as it would

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like to be, it has clumsily glued on more substance at one of its sides. Then it has thinned itself in a panic of economy; then puffed itself out again; then starved one side to enlarge another; then warped itself quite out of its first line. Opaque, rough-surfaced, jagged on the edge, distorted in the spine, it exhibits a quite human image of decrepitude and dishonour; but the worst of all the stigmata of its decay and helplessness, is that half-way up, a parasite crystal, smaller, but just as sickly, has rooted itself in the side of the larger one, eating out a cavity round its root, and then growing backwards, or downwards, contrary to the direction of the main crystal. Yet I cannot trace the least difference in purity of substance between the first most noble stone, and this ignoble and dissolute one. The impurity of the last is in its will, or want of will."

Herein is set forth clearly a statement of the action of the two cosmic powers, in their elemental stage, in the mineral kingdom. The conflict between these two forces is perceptible in the lowest mineral forms and can be followed up, through plant and animal life, to the final triumph of the esthetic principle in the men and women of the best developed races of man.

These two sorts of crystals symbolize the two cosmic forces operating throughout the material

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universe. In fact, the only two forces in existence are: the creative or organizing force and the disintegrating or dis-organizing force, or rather negation of force. Every movement in the universe is working in obedience to one or the other of these two impulses, of doing or undoing. Every human being, every race or nation of human beings, acts under one or the other of these influences. The work of every painter, sculptor or architect bears on the face of it evidence of the tendency toward disintegration or construction. The elements of negation in the arts are, primarily, not the result in every case of individual degeneracy, but often the subconscious effect of a collective, diseased, degenerate environment.

In a period of constructive art, such as existed during the Italian Renaissance, an artist may be personally profligate and immoral, yet his work will partake of the healthy and creative environment of his time. On the other hand, in a period of decadence, such as we are in now, the artist may be individually moral and upright and yet his work will reflect the basest and most degenerate attributes of his time. Thus, it is evident that, in any given period, the artist, if he works in harmony with his environment, is influenced by the mental and material environment of the period; and either reflects the col-

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lective will of the people, or something in conflict with that will.

In England, and America, for example, the mental and physical environment is wholly that of scientific machine industrialism and commerce. In England, where Morris, Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, Watts and Leighton did valiant work, with pen and brush, to establish an esthetic culture in an environment destructive to such culture, their efforts were futile. They are now supplanted by such sculptors as Epstein, and such art critics as Clive Bell and the late Roger Fry.

The exponents of true esthetic culture are still hampered in their free expression of plastic beauty, but can in a measure free themselves from the influences of modern industrial environment.

In this present period, for the first time in history, as far as is known, we have the spectacle of the true artist at war with his time and in conflict with the prevalent ideals of his race.

The crowning expression of the cosmos in man, so far as regards the esthetics of the sense of form, is wholly independent of what we call civilization. In fact, much of what is called civilization results, as regards the human figure, in a negation of the esthetic tendency of the cosmos. This esthetic tendency is attested by the

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beauty of the uncivilized aborigines, such for example as the natives of the Samoan Islands, the Zulus, the North American Indians, before they became diseased and degenerate through contact with the white race. To become civilized, without interrupting the orderly development of the esthetic volition of the cosmos in shaping the human figure, is the problem of the human race; in the degree of its solution, along these lines, lies the true test of civilization.

The Greeks were nearer this solution than other races before or since. For, recognizing the ideal of veritable beauty in well-formed human beings, they became conscious of a manifestation of the esthetic cosmos. This is indicated in their beautiful mythology, symbolic of the creative powers of nature. They realized that the crowning work of the plastic instinct, ultimating in man, prepared the way for a further manifestation of the esthetic cosmos, which, acting through the consciousness of man, issues in the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture. It is evident, therefore, that the creative, spiritual cosmos, through its whole range of normal action, ultimates in ideal beauty; that its stream of tendency toward this ultimate pervades the entire universe. It follows, then, logically, that any influence operating as a force of negation

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of the esthetic principle would begin by a negation of form, perfection of form being the very soul and basis of the esthetic ideal. Hence, these forces of negation, such as are seen in modernistic art, with its negation of perfect form by deforming, even mutilating, form, rise in conflict with the very soul of the universe. Then the will toward the negation of natural form, toward the mutilation of the human figure, becomes the blackest type of atheism, the deepest of all blasphemies.

For as Weininger has said: "Matter in itself is nothing, it can only attain existence through form. The fall of form is the corruption that takes place when form endeavors to relapse into the formless."

Such relapses into the formless, the essence of modernistic art, with its tortuous departures from nature, are un-natural elongations, monstrous disproportions, absurd, untruthful drawing, false color and generally corrupt spirit, which runs the entire gamut from stupid vulgarity to sex perversion. Says this same writer:

"Every inclination from the higher to the lower is a crime against oneself. Immorality is the will toward negation, the craving to change the formed into the formless, the wish for destruction."

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“Nothing is ugly,” observes Nietzsche, “except *degenerating* man;—the domain of esthetic judgment is thereby limited.—Re-examined physiologically, all that is ugly weakens and afflicts man. It reminds him of deterioration, of danger, and of impotence; he actually suffers loss of power by it. The effect of ugliness can be measured by the dynamometer. Whenever man is depressed, he has a sense of the proximity of something ugly. His sense of power, his will to power, his courage, his pride—they decrease with the ugly, they increase with the beautiful. In both cases *we draw an inference*, the premises of which are accumulated in enormous fulness of instinct. The ugly is understood as a sign and symptom of degeneration; that which reminds us in the remotest manner of degeneracy prompts us to pronounce the verdict, ‘ugly.’ Every indication of exhaustion, gravity, age, or lassitude; every kind of constraint, such as cramp or paralysis; and above all the odour, the colour, and the likeness of decomposition or putrefaction, be it utterly attenuated even to a symbol:—all these things call forth a similar reaction, the evaluation ‘ugly.’ A *hatred* is there excited: whom does man hate there? There can be no doubt: the *decline of his type*. The hatred is inspired by the most profound instinct of the species; there is horror, foresight, profundity, and far-reaching

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vision in it—it is the profoundest of all hatreds. On account of it, art is *profound*.”

The philosophy of beauty is the only true optimism. Schopenhauer developed a philosophy of the dominance of an evil Will in the world; he pictured the vast miseries of a deluded, stupid humanity, ending in dissolution, pain and death. But the esthetic principle in the universe is never overcome; it is eternal; over the wreck of civilizations and races it rises in renewed beauty.

The races of man pass like Chimeras over the world; of all their deeds only the works of the artists and poets, who momentarily grasped and recorded the beauty of the fleeting life, is enduring.

When one walks through the ruins of the Roman Forum, or surveys the mutilations of the Parthenon, one is impressed with the evidences of a blind volition to destroy, a malignant hatred of form and beauty, a hideous explosion of a long motivated vengeance. It was not a mere lust for destruction that moved the iconoclasts and barbarians to mutilate the Italian and Greek works of Art, it was some hidden strain, lying deep in the consciousness of the race, so deep that no psychology or psychoanalyst has yet plumbed the depth of it.

The human beings who move in harmony with the esthetic volition of the creative cosmos place

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themselves on the highest plane of existence. But those who would destroy beauty are the children of negation; they occupy the lowest plane of existence, with its inevitable corollary of oblivion.

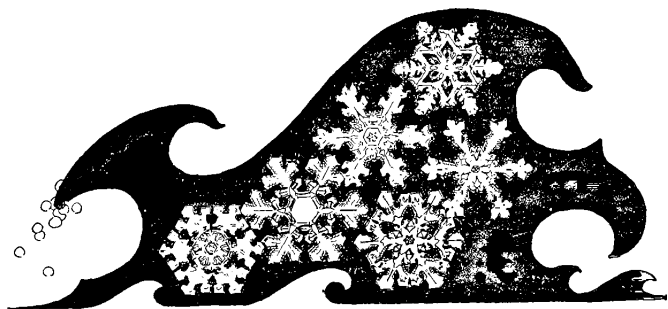
The foregoing is an attempt to set forth the cosmic intent to shape the physical world in beauty, to show that the ideal of beauty is the basic principle in the creative process.

This principle functions as an unchanging law in the normal process of nature, only to be disturbed by a principle hostile to order and beauty, the negation of ordered law and beauty in the universe. The life of man on this planet can be either a confirmation or denial of the cosmic intent.

It will be interesting, therefore, to inquire where we Americans stand in our relation to the cosmic plan of order and beauty. It is my belief that the greatest negation of this plan which has existed in historic times is now present in the United States of America. This negation has been developed from two causes: the Industrial Revolution and Democracy. The Industrial Revolution created the Machine Age with an environment of ugliness—Democracy, with its leveling gospel, destructive of creative genius, has brought chaos into the domain of esthetics.

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These conditions hostile to the cosmic plan prepared the ground and sowed the seed for a more intense form of negation, the advent of modernistic art.



2. *The Process of Negation*

The processes of negation, issuing in disease and distortion in animal life, are always unnatural; they are evidenced in disproportionate and unbalanced forms. These forms, or lack of form, are unbeautiful, ugly, and they fall into lines and angles suggestive of confusion and disintegration, indicating the operation of a principle anti-creative and incoherent, as opposed to the coherent and creative order of nature. These anti-creative and anti-cohesive characters of discordant forms in diseased animal life have their exact counterpart in the neurotic cults of painting and sculpture of the present time, which originated in Europe a quarter of a century ago and rapidly spread like a pestilence over the world.

The forms of disorganization created by disease are always angular, uneven and disproportionate. The ravages of cancer or lupus result in shapes unbalanced, jagged, and consequently ugly, visible signs of disorganization. These evidences of negation, as patterned by disease on the human figure, are paralleled in the irregular,

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disorderly and ugly movements observed in neurotic painting and sculpture, as contrasted with the rhythmic and beautiful movement so evident in the masterpieces of plastic art, and in normal animal life. Those movements and lines which, in general, we consider graceful and beautiful, are the ones which glide smoothly and evenly along without either break or interruption, jar or strain. The eye of man delights in following, and his hand in tracing them. Straight lines, on the other hand, display a higher static development and projection, where no change of direction is demanded, where it is not necessary to turn around a given point, and where the shortest line between two points is the easiest, smoothest and most economical of energy. An expression of the two esthetic principles of curved and straight lines is to be found in the Doric style of the Greeks and in the Gothic architecture.

Rectangular lines and patterns of lines, like a wooden packing box, or an empty rectangular window frame, are always felt as being ugly. That is why the seventy story main Rockefeller Center tower building is such a horror—it is all rectangles.

Per contra, curved lines and movements are felt to be beautiful, are in fact the very essence of all beauty. That is why the Parthenon had

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hardly a straight line and very few rectangular lines!

Those movements which in general we consider ugly and graceless are the ones in which we find sudden and unexpected turns, sharp rectangles, great indefiniteness, irregularity and disorder, much effort and little ease, much difficulty, roughness and antagonism. Such lines and movements involve jolts, jerks, jars, strains, great loss of impelling power, and lessened capacity to move; great dynamic discord, inefficiency and waste, and are of a low degree of dynamic development and power. The latter are the salient features of the neurotic cults of painting and sculpture from Manet—the father of Modernism—down to the present time.

The main elements of beauty are the pyramidal lines, which *lift* the mind, like a mountain; curved lines, which gently cradle the mind, like a human body. In the most beautiful picture of Claude Lorrain, his "Landscape," in the National Gallery, about 5% of the lines are rectangular, and about 20% are pyramidal, and about 75% are curved. This gives the "variety in unity," which, according to Plato, is the *basis* of all beauty, the melody of lines which makes us call the combination of any picture or work of art—beautiful.

The phenomenon of esthetic negation, the

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aversion to, and hatred of, sublime beauty, so much in evidence today in the art and life of America, is a problem which the philosophers and psychologists have ignored. The elements of the negation of beauty in the material world, as seen in the ravages of cancer, syphilis or leprosy, has its prototype in the mentality of the barbarian iconoclasts who mutilated the Greek and Roman art, in the Puritans of England, who destroyed the masterpieces of painting in the collection of Charles I, and in the degenerates of modernistic art and their supporters, who pollute the world with their obscene blasphemies.

In the monastery of Subiaco in Italy there are beautiful frescoes by masters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Whenever these frescoes are unprotected they are mutilated by people who scribble their names on the paintings, thereby completely ruining some of the finest works. One beautiful painting, of a female saint, with a face of spiritual refinement, executed by a gifted but unnamed artist, was entirely covered with clumsily scribbled names. Now, this is the work of the inferior man who, being totally sterile of a sense of beauty, still has a dread of oblivion, a desire for commemoration, a hunger for publicity. So, he selects a spot that is the center of observation. In the same spirit the inferior man desecrates the fair

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face of nature with modernistic architecture and other art.

Every work of art dedicated to beauty was a reproach and a malediction to the barbarian. Face to face with a beautiful statue or painting, the barbarian, or the Puritan, becomes conscious of a revelation to him of a higher plane of existence, from which he is forever debarred. Subconsciously, he experiences the tortures of a condemned soul, a consciousness of impotence, a sense of inferiority, an intuition of his final annihilation, which arouses in him the impulse to destroy the source of this terrible malediction.

The mutilated statues seen in the museums of Europe give mute evidence of an apocalyptic hatred of beauty, of blind vengeance, which vented itself on every esthetic creation.

The effects of the contact of the barbarian mentality with a beautiful work of art, is finely set forth by the genius of Goethe (as cited in a later chapter) in the second part of "Faust."

The destruction of Roman civilization was the greatest catastrophe ever visited upon the human race; the world is still staggering under the blow, from which it has never recovered. It would seem that the malignant vengeance of primeval chaos vented its destructive forces on the Greek and Latin races, for daring to evoke,

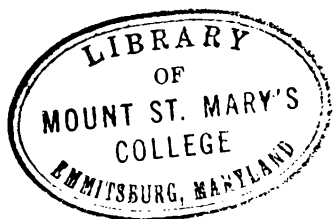
THE PROCESS OF NEGATION

with the magic of human genius, form and beauty from the formless.

It is interesting to note, that the hatred and negation of beauty of the barbarians and Puritans which expressed itself in the mutilation and destruction of Greek and Latin culture, called forth a different manifestation of the same spirit in modern times. With the exception of an explosion in the Reformation, and later in the French Revolution, the negation and hatred of beauty in modern times has taken the form of *creating a cult* of deformation.

In America there were no established traditions of a higher culture, such as existed in Europe. So with the desperation of an inferiority complex, aided by the environment of a machine civilization, the neurotic cults proclaimed the deification of the sadistic, the ugly, the obscene.

The decay of beauty, moreover, often coincides with spiritual bankruptcy. And who would deny that in the present instance the so-called modernist movement, begun before the war, with its subsequent post-war efflorescence, ran in astounding parallel with perhaps the worst spiritual decline known to history? Indeed, the entire machine age has steadily undermined and finally overthrown all the principles of human evolution known as culture, beauty and art . . .



3. *Contribution of Pseudo-Architects*

"What do these houses mean? Verily no great soul put them there to be its likeness!

"Did a silly child take them out of the toy-box? Would that another child would put them back into his box!"

—NIETZSCHE: "Thus Spake Zarathustra."

More than any other class, at the present time, the architects seem to be obsessed with the idea of mere bigness. They have become worshipers of and sacrificers to the god of size. Architecture as an art has vanished, to be replaced by the instinct and the science of the engineers. The only real asset remaining with the architect is his knowledge of engineering as applied to iron construction in building. Architecture as an art having been eliminated, the science of engineering was enlisted in the service of bigness. The mania for bigness allied to real estate gambling resulted in the ugly monotonous vogue of skyscrapers.

The rejection of the classic forms in architecture and the sterility of the engineering mind in creating new forms having become complete, the only refuge was the elemental parallelogram

CONTRIBUTION OF PSEUDO-ARCHITECTS

and the cube. Then the sole problem was that of engineering, to pile one cube on top of another cube to the height of a thousand feet, with holes punched in the cubes for windows, all precisely alike, resulting in a stupendous projection of emptiness. Result,—a monument symbolic of the human mind gone sterile and stupid.

In modernist building (be careful not to call it architecture), the abandonment of form for formlessness does not admit of ornament or decoration. Wherever sculpture is introduced it appears as an excrescence tacked onto a bare wall, a foreign element totally unconnected with the building, which emerges as an engineering triumph of empty simplicity. The modernist builder achieves infinite monotony, repetition, sameness.

The McGraw building in West Forty-second Street, New York, presents the aspect of a stack of Brobdignagian railroad ties. Likewise, the Daily News Building, in East Forty-second Street, is probably the most salient example of maniacal monotony, of deadly sameness, only equaled by the buildings in Radio City, and the Chicago Century of Progress. In the cosmic universe monotony is always mated with death. The Sahara Desert is monotonous, but it is dead. It maintains the aspect of sameness in a dead

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world. The salient features of all modernistic art is its repetition of ugly formlessness, its approach to death.

But, says the engineer, we engineers always have a definite objective. Our objective is to function; that is, whatever object we create is designed primarily for utility. This is the sole objective; all else is superfluous. When we build a bridge or a pump or a mill, we are functionalists. We calculate precisely what is demanded of the bridge or the pump or the mill. What are the traffic requirements of the bridge? If the bridge is required to accommodate five thousand people in a day, we do not build a bridge to serve twenty-five thousand people a day; if the demand of the pump is five thousand gallons an hour, we do not build a pump raising fifty thousand gallons an hour. If we construct a mill with a necessary capacity of one thousand tons of steel per day, we do not build a mill with an output of twenty thousand tons of steel per day. We engineers figure on the required function of the plant we design. Understand, we are only concerned with the function of the plant; we have nothing to do with architecture as an art. The factors of ornament or decoration, sculpture or painting, as connected with a building, do not enter into our calculations. That it functions, that it meets the

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demands of utility is our only concern with a building.

Well, let us see how the vast engineering creations, the skyscrapers in New York City, function, how they are meeting the necessary demand of output.

In obedience to the swollen mania of the engineers for bigness, for size, allied to the equally swollen greed of real estate gamblers, the output of the creations of the engineers vastly exceeds the demand to such an extent that over half the enormous apartment and office buildings in New York City went bankrupt and ceased to function as paying investments. The vast overproduction of office and apartment buildings has for a long time impaired and almost destroyed the real estate values in New York City. At this time (1934) most of the real estate in New York City is without value.

There has been absolutely no reason for the erection of skyscrapers in New York or any other city. There is ample room on Manhattan Island. Instead of crowding into a small area around Wall Street, there is the space stretching across the Island from Canal Street to Thirty-fifth Street, wherein buildings of uniform size could be built on a plan of architectural unity and beauty.

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Now let us glance at another aspect of our worship of the spectacular.

In America there is no longer any distinction in having money, consequently the possessors of great fortunes cast about for some other way to gain distinction and a brief respite from oblivion—also a reputation for culture. For deep down in the consciousness of the most sordid bourgeoisie, there is a feeling of the futility of merely accumulating francs or dollars, the possession of fast horses, or yachts, or kohinoor diamonds, or even the bequests to hospitals, schools, etc. These things no longer carry with them implications of culture; but a collector of art is generally accepted as a man or woman of taste and culture.

As great fortunes developed in America there appeared a vogue for the collecting of pictures, mostly of old masters. There was a competition between multi-millionaires for the possession of the most renowned masterpieces at the highest prices, resulting in marvelous profits for the picture dealers and also for the makers of counterfeit old masters. But now, since there are so many collectors of old masters, there is no longer any distinction in this form of displaying wealth. It has become commonplace.

The propagandists of neurotic art, modernistic art, have been quick to recognize the situa-

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tion. They are taking advantage of it; they are presenting to the wealthy bourgeoisie the opportunity to join in a great movement in esthetic culture that shall establish a new principle in esthetics and make a revolution in painting, sculpture and architecture.

This inflames the imagination of the man or woman of wealth in three ways: it offers them distinction; it has the fascination of being new and strange and it gives them *réclame* as culture-bearers and men of taste. The would-be collector having no background of esthetic culture falls an easy victim to this appeal to his egoism and snobbery, and the picture dealer adds another victim to his list.

This movement is well organized by the "Marchands de Tableaux" and many of them are still holding large numbers of specimens of modernistic art. They have failed to sell them in Europe and have therefore infallibly organized a campaign to unload them on stupid and ignorant American millionaires. These dealers have had a measure of success. The conquistadores of the modernistic art movement have organized museums. Having perfected the organization of a museum in New York, and being experts in the technique of high-power salesmanship, they wasted no time in making contact with millionaires. The organizers of the museum then

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discovered some Mexican painters among whom was one, Rivera, whom they have exploited for some years, as a genius of a very high order.

It was logical, therefore, that through the panegyrics of the go-getters of a pseudo-museum, aided also by the enthusiastic support of the pseudo-art critics and the influence of the ladies, a prominent millionaire should have his attention directed to the proximity of the great genius, Rivera. Then, the high-power real estate geniuses and pseudo-architects got busy and formulated the plan of Radio City. Visualize, if you can, the opportunity for fame and glory presented by high-powered salesmen, the real estate go-getters and the pseudo-architects! Here is opportunity with a big "O" to inscribe the millionaire's name alongside Pericles, Mæcenas, the Medici, on fame's eternal roll. In addition, it made him a pioneer in another Renaissance of art that would relegate the classic tradition of art to that much dreaded oblivion from which the millionaires believed they escaped by becoming the champions of modernistic art. Like the Hindoo god Siva, our millionaire becomes the Destroyer and Restorer. Finally the great plan is realized. Through the united efforts of the genius of the real estate go-getters and the rhapsodies of the pseudo-architects and art critics, Rockefeller Center reared its huge mass of

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emptiness made visible, adorned by the murals of Rivera.

Probably the most salient feature of American thought today is the fetish for bigness. It has captured the imagination of the Americans in every department of their lives. That anything is big is sufficient. Now and then one hears the slogan, sandwiched between Amos 'n' Andy, of "bigger and better." The better is superfluous. We Americans do not concern ourselves much about the better. If it is big, no questions are asked.

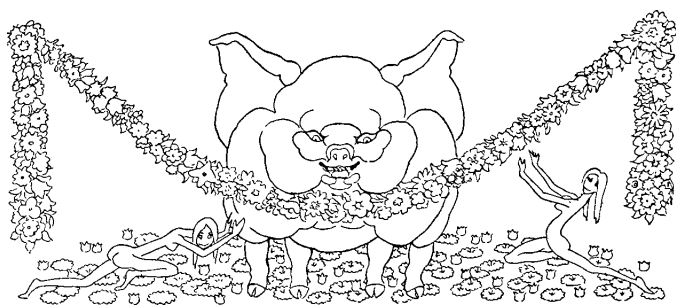
For example, the late Mr. Kreuger had the reputation of being the biggest thing in the way of big corporations in the world. He was the god of big corporations, so the bankers fell down and worshiped him. So great was the awe and the adoration of this god that he could go into one of the most conservative banks of the country and get \$10,000,000 — without collateral, solely on the strength of his supposed bigness.

Mr. Insull, of Chicago, another god of bigness, played the same game with great success. No doubt the bigness of the scheme of Radio City was equally appealing.

Now, what have we of this achievement that is to win immortality for the promoters? A conglomeration of boxes with holes punched in for windows, formless, stupid monotony; through-

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out a drab sameness, and the murals of Rivera. In all the ballyhoo about those murals the only question discussed was the Bolshevist propaganda expressed in the paintings; no word of criticism was allowed as to the real status of the paintings as works of art. A criticism of the paintings from this standpoint was sent to one of the leading morning papers, but was refused publication. To view the mural as a work of art is only to condemn it as bad art; bad in drawing, atrocious in color, incoherent in composition, with its stupid symbolism of revolution. The painter is a rabid communist with an apocalyptic hatred of all disciplined tradition of life and art. This is the blind rage of an inferior man venting itself in vindictive maledictions on the superior intellect and genius of the world.





4. *Machine Art*

"Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin. Yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

—JESUS OF NAZARETH.

The machine is the symbol of abstraction. Any gesture in the direction of the abstraction of form is the first step toward the annihilation of form. The machine is the ultimate step and completion of this abstraction. Every revolution of the machine is a gesture of repetition and monotony, hostile to the universal cosmic law of variety and change.

Mass production is the abstraction of the individual in the mass. To mix all the colors of the palette in a mass is to destroy the individual beauty of each individual color; result: abstraction of all colors, mud; this is democracy. Yet to mix all the colors of the palette into an abstract mud is the real meaning of all the ballyhoo

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about universal unity and a League of Nations.

After all, does not the astronomer tell us that all the created universe is being slowly but surely radiated off into space? Pure abstraction,—we may be entering the first stage of that cosmic process wherein the mentality of the human race is being subjected to the gradual disintegration of mental powers. Who knows? Through modern industrial science we may be advancing to the Nirvana.

In New York in March, 1934, there was a unique exhibition, which gave a lively example of the vogue for abstraction, the atrophy of the esthetic instinct and the sense of form. In a Museum dedicated to esthetic culture one would expect to see paintings, sculpture and works of the various plastic arts. Instead, visitors were confronted with a display of automobile accessories and plumbers' supplies, steel springs, ball bearings, tubes, boat propellers, etc. Certainly, the exhibition of automobile parts and plumbers' supplies is an everyday affair. These articles are useful and are important factors in everyday life. But this exhibition was unique in that the articles exhibited were not presented as automobile parts or as articles of use, but as works of art, to be considered from an esthetic standpoint, and not from the point of view of practical usefulness.

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This invested the exhibition with a suggestion of something deeper and more significant than the mere play of charlatans launching a new fad. It may be interesting and instructive to inquire into the mental state of the people who originated and sponsored the imposture of an exhibition of machine parts as works of art.

One can discern in the provocation of the exhibition the presence of that spirit that permeates every volition of life in America, the spirit of the predatory salesman, the go-getter, who presents something up to date. Here we detect all the earmarks of the promotion of quack medicines, mouth washes, hair dyes, corner lots, etc. Testimonial writers were pressed into service from Plato to Miss Perkins and Professor John Dewey, also Mr. Edward Alden Jewell, in his best vegetable market and catalogue style. So much for the go-getter salesman element in the exhibition.

Another factor evident in the exhibition was the presence of the influence of the vast machine obsession that envelops America. Or rather, it is the hypnotism of the machine which is so powerful as to exorcise all other volitions of the human will, to the extent of creating a religion of machine worship, having for its first shrine and temple the Museum of Modern Art, with

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proper equipment of priests and acolytes. The Americans are machine minded, machine drunk. Is it possible that they are in such mental state as to accept the claims of machine and automobile parts as works of art?

The advent of the machine and its parts, claimed as creations of esthetic beauty, should become historic. The exhibition is symptomatic of the mental degradation of the self-elected leaders of culture, who align themselves with the Bolshevik program to destroy all standards, all traditions, and reduce art to a proletarian machine product. As a sign of the times the exhibition was important.

The canonization of ball bearings, nuts and bolts and monkey wrenches, as esthetic creations of beauty, by those high priests of culture who constituted the jury, introduced another element of the negation of beauty into the domain of esthetics. The members of the jury selected to canonize the machine parts as works of art were Professor John Dewey, of Columbia University, Miss Amelia Earhart, aviatrix, Miss Perkins, Secretary of Labor, and Professor Charles R. Richards of the Museum of Science and Industry. It will be noted that no artist was on the jury.

Professor Dewey in his verdict falls back on a far-fetched quotation from Plato which had no

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connection with machinery and was evidently meant to apply to architectural forms; Plato says:

“By beauty of shapes I do not mean, as most people would suppose, the beauty of living figures or of pictures, but, to make my point clear, I mean straight lines and circles, and shapes, plane or solid, made from them by lathe, ruler and square. These are not, like other things, beautiful relatively, but always and absolutely.”

This is a statement of the obvious and is plainly untenable as a test of beauty. Every schoolboy knows that all natural forms, in animals, plants and minerals, can be resolved into a geometric plan, which is the skeleton of the natural form. The human skeleton is a perfect geometric plan, but the skeleton of a man or animal is not beautiful until it is clothed with flesh and life.

This glorification of machine art is only one of the gestures put forth by the modernists to destroy the true ideal of beauty. In their desperation they invoke Plato. Their action is significant and consistent. Plato and his master Socrates were the first literary decadents. Some capable critics have found that the philosophy of

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Socrates was at the bottom hostile to the Greek will to life and beauty, so they, very properly, gave him hemlock! Plato would eliminate from his Republic poets and artists, conclusive proof that he was a decadent and indicative that he lacked any sense of beauty. The philosopher Nietzsche hints at the source of inspiration of the philosophy of Plato; according to Plato himself, Nietzsche declares that:—

“... There would be no Platonic philosophy at all, were there not such handsome youths in Athens; it was only the sight of them which put the soul of the philosopher into an erotic ecstasy, and gave it no rest until it had implanted the seed of all high things in such a fine soil.”

The invocation of Plato is an old trick of the modernists. Plato is respectable, an established tradition with scholars; to invoke Plato is to make their thesis respectable. In exhibitions of modernist paintings, there will always be found a painting by Ingres and a drawing by Daumier sandwiched in among the sadistic creations of Cézanne and Matisse. The instinct to be found “*en bonne société*” is always present in outcasts.

It is very amusing, the spectacle of the de-

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cadents of the twentieth century, reaching for help to the decadents of classic Greece!

The following is Miss Earhart's contribution to the canonization:

"I think the exhibition a great step forward in that I believe people may see beauty in machines that so often we think of as only crude—which is not the case for any one who has eyes to see."

These last words of Miss Earhart, "for any one who has eyes to see," recall the seeing of Carlyle's Monks of Athos who, by gazing intently into their navels for long periods, finally viewed the city of New Jerusalem. Being an aviatrix, Miss Earhart has gazed at machinery so intently for long periods, that, like the monks seeing the New Jerusalem, she sees a ball bearing as a work of art.

Then we have the opinion of another member of the jury, Professor Richards:

"The natural office of the machine is not to produce ornament, but to produce line that expresses function, process and material. Mass production when dealt with in this spirit can produce not only things appropriate to the machine but things of real

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beauty. This exhibition is a demonstration of these possibilities.”

So, if the machine produces line that expresses function, process and material, the product then becomes a work of art. But how can the function be expressed with a line? The function of a ball bearing can only be expressed in a finished car in action.

Now can the process of creating a ball bearing be expressed by a line from the time the ore is converted into pig iron, turned into steel and shaped into a ball bearing?

The professor then goes on to say that mass production when dealt with in this spirit can produce not only things appropriate to the machine, but things of real beauty; as examples of mass production, there are rivets and carpet tacks.

The professor does not mean a finished automobile, which may be beautiful if designed artistically, he means the parts of the machine, nuts, bolts, bearings, etc.

The action of the jury in the exhibition of machine art deserves a place in history along with a famous decision by a jury in a more classic age than the present, wherein the merit of a work of art was to be determined. It was the

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celebrated contest between Marsyas and Apollo; Midas was the jury.

Some of the parties to that exhibition fared badly. Marsyas exhibited his work, falsely claiming it to be a work of art when it was not art, and was condemned to be flayed alive. Midas, the jury, was sentenced to wear the ears of an ass the rest of his life, for making a decision in favor of Marsyas. However, in this humanitarian age such punishment is not possible. . . .

Mr. Johnson who organized the show will not actually be skinned alive, though mentally, in the minds of people who know, he may undergo that process. Professor Dewey, Miss Earhart and Professor Richards will not wear real ass's ears; however, they may be mentally invested with such appendages by thoughtful people.

With an ever present desire to recognize merit, I must remove my hat to Mr. Edward Alden Jewell for his very able press work dedicated to the success of the Machine Art Show. In his discourses on the subject of machine art, Mr. Jewell rises to a state of ecstasy and enthusiasm very rare in this utilitarian age. In this state of exaltation he pens the following:

“The exhibition, one of the most engrossing ever held here is irradiated with a beauty

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that lifts function to its loftiest plane. As a pleasant pastime we may, if we will, designate 'the most beautiful object,' although, finding it absolutely, abstractly and ideally impossible to rate one above the other, the bearing spring which was selected by Miss Perkins, and the steel ball bearing (No. 13), voted for by Professor Richards, I am inclined profligately to open my heart to all the pots and pans and mixing bowls as well, and, while the opulent mood endures, to that pair of fascinating refractometers and to at least two of the microscopes."

It will be noted that Mr. Jewell finds it "absolutely, abstractly and ideally impossible to rate one above the other" of the exhibits. It is instructive to know that no ball bearing is superior to another ball bearing or roller bearing, that springs, coils and insulators are quite equal to tubes, gears and propellers and that every carpet tack is equal to every other carpet tack.

Also Mr. Jewell "found it impossible to perceive beauty as not inextricably bound up in the function of the object"; I must repeat his text:

"Nearly everything in the exhibition seemed to me beautiful. I found it im-

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possible to perceive beauty as not inextricably bound up in the function of the object."

Now this is a choice bit of ecstatic rhapsody. Pray, what is the function of the iridescence of a rainbow? What is the function "inextricably bound up" in a beautiful flower?

Jesus of Nazareth said: "Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these."

Now, there was no question of function or utility in the perception of the flower, by Jesus, when He said that "they toil not, neither do they spin." It established the fact that the element of use or function was not existent. The beauty of the lily was the sole fulfillment and reason for its existence. Jesus stated the principle true for all time that beauty is its own excuse for being, a principle which all the machine-drunk cobblers in the world cannot displace.

"And now the Genius of Mechanism smothers him worse than any Nightmare did; till the soul is nigh choked out of him, and only a kind of Digestive, Mechanic life remains. In Earth and in Heaven he can see nothing but Mechanism; has fear for nothing else, hope in nothing else."

CARLYLE: "Sartor Resartus."

5. *The Tabloids and Yellow Press*

The tabloids and the yellow press are read by the vast majority; they are the diversion of the working class; they can be found in every kitchen, garage and workshop, from New York to San Francisco. The fact that the tabloids meet with such a universal response and success may be taken as a fair gauge of the mental and moral status of a majority of the American people who support them and make them profitable investments for their owners. The technique and processes of the Yellows are employed by some of the larger newspapers, so that, at times, it is difficult to distinguish between them.

Of course, the publishers of the tabloids and the yellow press are "business men." Before venturing on a commercial enterprise, the business man makes a careful survey of the possible demand for his product and, no doubt, this was done before the tabloids were unloosed on the world. The business sense of their promoters was justified by the widespread acclaim and instant success of their venture.

Right here it may be proper to make a distinction between the promoters and the victims

THE TABLOIDS AND YELLOW PRESS

of a vicious influence. There is much denunciation of bootleggers, dope-peddlers, white-slave traffickers, and vendors of obscene literature; but not enough is said about the people who create the demand for these products. To such people nothing can be done. But something can be done to remove these vicious influences from corrupting the young. This could only be brought about under a dictatorship; it could never be attained under a democracy.

Democracy is a monstrous magnet that pulls up from the abyss, from the hidden depths of the human consciousness, all the forces of negation that degrade human life; and, one of the most repulsive and poisonous forms of negation pulled up by the democratic magnet is the yellow press, one of the most efficient agencies in creating a corrupt mental environment. It deals principally, as does much of our fiction, with sex-lust and crime, and the spirit that radiates from them is crude cynicism and low vulgarity, the banal and the commonplace. That class of publication forms the intellectual pabulum of the gangsters and criminals.

In Chicago at a meeting of the International Association of Police Chiefs, Mr. Malcolm W. Bingay, editorial director of the *Detroit Free Press*, delivered an address to that association

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on the subject of newspaper responsibility. In part, this is what Mr. Bingay said:

“The vast majority of the newspapers of America are law-abiding institutions. But the yellows are outlaws, violating all moral, ethical and legal codes. And then there is another small and equally sinister group that is in the twilight zone, the near yellows, which parade under a cloak of respectability. Though pretending virtue they surreptitiously steal upon the streets to snatch trade from the sisterhood of the night.

“It is of the sensational, irresponsible and scandal-mongering element of the press that I speak. And I say to you as my honest belief that the rise of the American gangster has been due in no small degree to the growth of yellow journalism in America. . . .

“The yellow press of America created the fiction of the gangster and then through that fiction made him a reality. . . .

“But he is glorified by the yellow press until he takes on a glamor in the minds of the susceptible, the moronic and the thoughtless. Very often he is surrounded with the romantic aura of a Robin Hood. His sartorial splendors are exploited and his

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various bought-and-paid for women are presented in all their sensual loveliness. He is offered to the youth of America as a cunning, clever, daring idol to be emulated. Crime is made as fascinating and tempting as printer's ink and photographic art can make it.

"The reporters and the editors of the yellow press act as press agents for these criminals. They build up great legends around them until fiction becomes more powerful than fact. . . ."

The tabloids have their complement in the colored comic strips. These comic strips are also important features in nearly all the important newspapers in the country; their universal contact is only equaled by that of the Radio. To the observer from Mars, the comic strips might be taken as a record of the daily current of American life. The favorite theme seems to be the discord of family life, especially the failure and misery of married life. The youth of the country form their concept of married life from the stupidity and wrangling of "Mr. and Mrs. Jiggs"; the young men receive their impressions of young womanhood from perusing the adventures of "Tillie the Toiler." The women presented in the comic strips, are either coarse

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viragoes or cocktail drinking, jazzy flirts; while the men are stupid, semi-idiotic, and disloyal to their wives and families.

The vision of both men and women shown in the comic strips never rises above bridge and jazz and cocktails, with a world outlook ranging from Long Island to Wall Street, or from Coney Island to Columbus Circle. In the comic strips the people's faces are idiotic; the human figure is debased to vulgar and sadistic types; the printed matter is a mutilated travesty of the English language, coarse and stupid.

Children are especially attracted to the gaudy coloring and strident printing of the comic strips; their widespread circulation, being a feature of the newspaper world, must logically have an enormous influence on the young generation of Americans, stimulating a taste for vulgarity and developing a negation of beauty in form and language. Possessing the above qualifications for degrading human life the comic strips may be listed as one of the active agencies of an environment of negation.

The comic strips have arrived at absolute democracy. All alike are of a sadistic ugliness and vulgarity. The English language converted into the slang of the gutter is reduced to the abysmal level of the illustrations.

It may be argued that the printing press also

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makes available sound literature, on sociology, science, economics, and so on. So it does. But this reaches a very limited class, a comparatively small minority. The enormous majority, who have the votes, do not read about sociology, science or economics. Their whole outlook on life and art is formed by the tabloids, the comic strips and the movies.



CHAPTER II

1. *The Reign of Democracy*

“For the hour has come, thou knowest it, for the great, bad, long, slow rebellion of the mob and the slaves. It groweth and groweth!

“Now all almsgiving and petty giving make the low rebellious. And the over-rich ought to be on their guard!”

—NIETZSCHE: “Thus Spake Zarathustra.”

IN the study of any cultural movement, it is important that the environment, from which that culture emerges, should be understood. The material environment in America, was determined by scientific industrialism. Under the conditions of uncontrolled industrialism and an uncontrolled mania for profits, industrial science became the slave of human greed, and fashioned the three-headed god: quantity-production, speed and noise. The Americans became the abject slaves to this god. Unlike other gods, this one visited punishment instead of reward upon his devotees. For, through quantity production, we have the terrible depression, with starvation, misery and death, and its inevitable companion, despair. For speed, for speed's sake, our god exacts a

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sacrifice of 32,000 human lives and over a million cripples annually. Compared to our three-headed god, Juggernaut was a "piker"! To what do these victims of the speed mania sacrifice their lives? To flying or rolling from point to point, faster than another. Is not this a species of insanity?

It is the purpose of this small book to suggest a survey of the principal forms of negation induced by the environment of a reign of pure industrialism. The sole object of the system being the gaining of material results, it tends naturally to the total exclusion of the graces of life and of every ideal of culture. These forms of negation affect the daily life of every human being in the United States of America. The immense significance of this is their baleful influence on the youth of our country in forming the cultural and moral status of the future American race.

What manner of art, it may be asked, do the Americans respond to? For it cannot be said that Americans do not respond to art. No nation, not even Italy in the palmy days of the Renaissance, equaled the Americans in the extent of the demand and in the rewards gained by artists, developed since the World War.

The movies seem to be the form of art most in favor now. This art is rewarded on a fabulous

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scale unknown before. Witness the enormous capital employed and the swollen salaries paid to movie actors and actresses. The following is an example of the homage paid by Americans to the movies.

Some years ago a famous movie star died. He lay in state one day in New York. On that day tens of thousands of staid folk stood in the rain for hours waiting their turn to view the corpse of a movie celebrity. Such rewards and honors have heretofore only been awarded to martyred presidents, kings and conquerors.

Then there are the comic strips. Aside from the movie stars this is the most profitable branch of the art work. Some of the comic strip artists ride in luxurious cars and own magnificent country places. Certainly, the American public lavishly rewards the kind of art it understands and demands.

There are four main divisions of art in America:

1. The art of surface designing. Plastic art, expressed in the advertising cult; the comic strips or funnies, and paintings.
2. The stage—expressed in drama, musical comedy, the movies or the talking movies, which are much more deadly than the original simple cinemas.

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3. Literature, as expressed in the tabloids and sensational press, art criticism and current fiction.
4. Music and the dance.

The Democratic theory of equality which we Americans have been bred on has been largely responsible for the wild rush for education. All the professions are overcrowded. If all men are equal, then logically it follows that all men and women can be educated. Now this is one of the most foolish and stupid fallacies of Democracy; very few men and women can be educated. The widespread doctrine of the capacity of everybody to be educated accounts for the vast hordes of the halt and lame and blind who have invaded the field of art as artists and art critics.

In Europe the democratic doctrine of equality had been preached as applied to the arts resulting in the *Salôn des Independants*, and the rise of the modernist movement, the advent of the mob in the domain of the arts. Democracy followed by anarchy. The way was paved to this anarchy by the advent of Impressionism in Paris as in New York.

Camille Mauclair in a brilliant article in the "*Figaro*" of three years ago describes the gradual process of the obliteration of all standards which marks the approaching reign of Democracy in the arts:

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“This century is thirty years old but in spite of all the bluffs of every kind, promises of *chef d’œuvres* done or to be accomplished, this century did not innovate anything of value; we do not call innovation the sadistic tendencies we see everywhere now. This century invented two strong reasons to kill the art of pictures: first, mercantilism in the arts; second, shameless and boundless technique. According to Degas’ prophecy, everybody paints or at least believes he is painting. It is so easy! Nobody would dare call himself a musician without some knowledge of harmony, counterpoint and orchestration; but everybody who puts his name down at the corner of a canvas has eight times out of ten no drawing technique, no art composition, in fact he only possesses the art of keeping us staring and wondering how in the name of common sense he ever could imagine the sights we are called to contemplate and criticize. These modern painters, so they say, obey their personal vision and call it synthesis.

“The art critic runs from one exhibition to another. All he says about each and all contains about fifty words; everything is either amusing, colorful, original, sincere, or shows deep feeling. He goes everywhere, from the sumptuous gallery to the rat-hole in some mean street. Buyers from the Government, resigned and tired, en-

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courage by their indiscriminate buying the sales of these horrors. Soon everybody will be in the Luxembourg. In the old days, *amateurs d'art* for the pleasure of it, were laughed at. They were part of the education of the bourgeoisie. Now it is worse than ever. The girls who only painted for the old uncle, or the maiden aunt's birthday, usually stopped that daubing on the day of their marriage. Now that happy time is ended. They go on painting and painting, but they try by all means possible to sell and add money to their small incomes; times are hard, money must be made somehow. No scruples of any kind—everything is for sale. Doctors exhibit, lawyers, too; soon the butcher, the chauffeur and the grocer on the next corner will also exhibit. In these democratic times everybody can paint and must express himself; every citizen has the right to be mediocre, silly or incontinent. *Vive la République!* Hate of tradition and technique can be seen under all forms. This terrible tendency helps the extremists and *primaires*; born to understand each other thoroughly, they declare that no distinction should be made between amateurs and professionals, that only talent existed. It is good reasoning on a false premise. In a strict sense of the word, a painter is a man, who doing good or bad work, is in possession of a *métier*, or a way of making his

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living. Such a man is already a victim of a terrible professional competition. Nobody knows the hidden miseries, the tragedies brought through the protagonists of 'art vivant,' fauvism, etc. . . . The insolent fortunes of some of them cannot hide the debasement of an art which used to be noble and splendid; for an easy art is inevitably depreciated and debased. Times are near when the good painters as well as bad ones will sink in a bottomless abyss. Soon nobody will look at painting good or bad."

In addition to the handicap imposed on the critic by his ignorance of the subject, the pseudo art critic finds his art controlled by the exigencies of the trade. First of all, he must be subject to the demands of the picture *dealers*. Whatever the fashion in art happens to be in pictures, the art critic, if he wants to hold his job on his newspaper or magazine must grind out panegyrics of *the stock in trade* of the dealers.

In the eighties and nineties, it was French and Dutch pot-boilers which were the vogue. This fashion like all fashions, waned and became passé. The dealers began a *search for novelties*. Just then the cult for modernistic degenerate art began its development; the dealers found their novelties in the despised and rejected works of the new cult. They gathered in the clumsy daubs of Cézanne; the stupid, half baked strug-

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gles of Van Gogh; the vulgar dropsical malformations of Gauguin; and later, the psychopathic mutilations of Matisse, Picasso and their followers. The modernist cult became the fashion in art, chiefly through the influence of the press.

The dealers and critics joined in a crescendo of salutation to the new cult. It was a godsend to both dealers and critics and to the vast mob of defective dabblers in art. To the dealers it supplied the sought-for novelties; it opened up a vast expanse of potential trade profits; it was no less welcome to the failures in art and to the critics; it eliminated drawing and design, and the need of knowledge.

Imagine the sensation of liberation that possessed the art critic and the dealer, when they realized that they were free of the canons and discipline of the old order and realized that the old gods were dead. Said they: For thousands of years the ideals of beauty, proportion, power and decency had been regarded as the basic attributes of true art. What we have suffered from this tyranny! At last we are free! We salute the advent of an art devoted to the exposition of the ugly, the vulgar, the obscene, the sadistic deformation of the human form.

Do you object? Are not ugliness, vulgarity, sadistic deformation and obscenity human attributes? Have not these as much claim to be the

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subjects of representation in painting and sculpture as the virtues and beautiful figures, poetry and grandeur?

But, so are syphilis and cancer attributes of the human being; then, why not encourage the spread of syphilis and cancer?

Following the example of Genghis Khan, and the iconoclasts, the art critics of the new cult set to work to *destroy all former cults in art*; in fact, they highly resolved that they were destroyed (on paper); that the apocalypse was sounded, that the heaven of beautiful classic art was rolled up like a scroll; and the chants of the saved, including those of the Museum of Modern Art, and the Barnes Foundation, arise in unison with the chorus of art dealers and art critics.

However, the apocalypse of classic art, unlike that of the New Testament, was not a total destruction of the ancient régime of art; there was a reservation. The beauty of the art of the ancient régime makes it immortal. The degenerates forgot that!

Thanks to the exigencies of trade, the eighteenth century English and French painters escaped destruction; they were saved, for the reason that certain dealers on upper Fifth Avenue had large stocks of the above period for sale. The exigencies of trade were the salvation in

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America of the portrait art of the eighteenth century.

Another task of the art critic was to establish a background for modernistic art and create a fad for the ugly. Over crude carvings of degraded tribes of African negroes, they grind out eulogies of ecstasy; over the deformed and brutal figures of the extinct Maya race they go into rhapsodies—likewise over the primal beginnings of the art of the savage races.

This cult of the ugly seems to be well established even among some conservative artists. They seem to be possessed by a fetishistic conviction that ugliness expresses power. It is the negation of power.

In all this the art dealer went hand in glove with all the pursuivants of the new craze and, in fact, dominated the movement. They soon added African jungle masks and gruesome idols to their picture stocks in order to unload them on our collectors of art and curios, not only upon laymen, but even on directors of museums.

Later, when they had customers in their toils, they could show them a sale-catalogue with the prices at which the pictures had been quoted at a *previous auction sale*, and the price they had brought at that sale. The customer believing the *rise* in prices to have been *genuine*, and being told by the dealer that the prices would go still higher,

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and having faith in the dealer, bought and, in most cases, was himself "sold" in the transaction—that is to say—swindled! That auction sale was a "wash-sale"!

Some art dealers have exhibition rooms, which they rent out to any artist who comes along, be his art ever so bad. The exhibition is advertised in the press and, of course, the dealer tries to sell as many of the pictures as possible, for he gets a commission of 10 or 20% on all sales. Therefore, even though he may despise the pictures on his walls, he is bound to praise them to the skies, as an investment for his customers.

To establish equality in the arts, the first step is to discredit and destroy all accepted standards in esthetics. To this end there has been an organized conspiracy since the advent of Impressionism by art critics and writers on art to discredit the academies and create the impression that discipline in drawing and design is not only worthless but a distinct detriment to the progress of the artist.

When Manet, Monet, Rénoir, the group of Impressionists, made their appearance in Paris, some journalists who elected themselves art critics started a vicious attack upon the Academy Art Schools. They held up to scorn such masters as Cabanel, Gérôme, Boulanger and Lefebvre. Those writers without knowing it paved the way,

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prepared the ground for the advent of "les fauves" (the wild men) and such wretched bunglers as Cézanne, Picasso, Gauguin and, later, Matisse and his gang of imitators. Those eulogists of the Impressionists and maligners of the Academy were sowers of Dragon's teeth.

In France the Impressionists were hailed as the discoverers of light. The works of Monet were interesting as experiments in broken colors, but they led to no important results. With the exception of Henri Martin, no painter of talent employed Monet's system. As for penetrating the mysteries of light, the Dutch and French artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries went much further than any of the Impressionists. Also the French masters, Chardin, Fantin-Latour, Bastien-Lepage, Henner, Baudry and Dagnan-Bouveret had a much greater command of light than the Impressionists.

For sheer painting the work of Manet was inferior to other masters of the French school. I possess two studies by Doucet made in the Academy Julien that, as paintings, are superior to anything executed by Manet.

Compare the work of Manet with the masterpiece of Gérôme "The Cockfight," or a fine nude by the master Besnard, and the "Olympia" is insignificant. A commonplace subject of Franz

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Hals, Jordaens and the Flemish masters, the painting of everyday life, of commonplace subjects, become masterpieces when executed by the hands of Millais, Bastien-Lepage or Jules Breton—superior men, whose noble interpretation of common life was still further ennobled by a masterly concept of form and color.

The fetish of equality has now a practical application in the arts. We are approaching real democracy in the arts. The discredit of the masters of the classic tradition of the French school by the eulogists of the Impressionists was the first public attempt to pull down to a lower level of inferior men the men of superior talent and achievement in the arts. All memories of the work of superior men must be effaced, as the barbarians effaced the sculptures of Greece and Rome. The warfare on tradition and precedent in the arts conceals the danger of comparison of present-day work with that of former masters. This trick also operates to hide the ignorance of the charlatan critics.

The democratic ideal is embodied in its most extreme form in the movies. Here is the most complete expression of equality. In the comic strips everybody is equally ignoble. In current fiction and on the stage the distinct trend is to reduce geniuses, lords, priests and people to a

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dead level of the commonplace—that is Democracy.

The street exhibition of works of art held in Washington Square in August 1933, was a good example of the practical application of the principles of democratic equality in the arts. It was one hundred per cent democratic, representing the common people, the rank and file who recklessly rushed into painting and sculpture. Here was work untainted by the academy, unpolluted by any sort of instruction, free, democratic. It was a demonstration of independence that all men are created free and equal; for there was a remarkable sameness and monotonous quality in the dead level of stupidity, ignorance of the elementary principles of plastic art. There was no variety in the lack of imagination, but there was a total absence of a color sense or sense of form and design.

One might expect not to find good drawing in the works of an untrained horde. But color is a personal gift, independent of acquired training. The instinct for color is of all the faculties the most sensitive to environment. Among the several hundred of works exhibited in Washington Square, I did not see one that had a feeling for tone or color. There was a pervading tone of drabness, the influence of a drab environment.

Another exhibition of similar character was

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held at the Fine Arts Building at about the same time. The general average of this exhibition was about on the level with that of Washington Square, with a difference in the personnel of the exhibitors. The exhibition at Washington Square was supposed to represent chiefly the work of professional artists, while the exhibition of the Fine Arts Building was composed of amateurs, working people of all classes in the vocations of city life. Clerks, salesmen, druggists, stenographers, bookkeepers, teachers, the whole white-collar class, upon the one hand, and upon the other the horny-handed sons of toil—porters, piano movers, plumbers, taxi drivers, etc. . . .

I believe the only class not represented was that of chorus girls. Why this oversight? In a way the exhibition at the Fine Arts Building was more democratic than that of Washington Square. It was more disorderly and incoherent; the slatternly hanging of the pictures and the general untidiness of the room gave a hint of the inevitable merging of democracy into anarchy and chaos. In both exhibitions one was impressed with the waste of human energy in the futile struggle of the impotent in their newly awakened urge to create. Many of the people who attempt the arts and fail could be employed at useful work. Instead they struggle on, starve and

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freeze, ending a sad futile life with a weary death.

It would be interesting if there could be arranged literary competitions with contributions from the rank and file comparable to the art display of the Fine Arts Building and consisting of verse, fiction, philosophy and general literature. It might be the beginning of a proletarian literature. Except in Russia, so far as I know, there has been no attempt at proletarian literature, unless the output of Mr. Dreiser and Mr. Upton Sinclair could be classed as such. As Mr. Aldous Huxley has well pointed out, there is no proletarian literature outside of Russia. Mr. Huxley writing in the *New York American*, remarks that the present current fiction deals almost wholly with the trading class, the bourgeoisie. They are the ruling class, taking the place, observes Mr. Huxley, of the ancient kings, emperors and popes.

“Critics are like the vulgar birds that swarm in our public gardens and perch arrogantly on the most beautiful statues; and when they have befouled the forehead of Jupiter, the arms of Hercules, or the bosom of Venus, strut about with as much pride and satisfaction as if they had laid a golden egg.”

—BERLIOZ.

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“Blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long.”

—TENNYSON.

In no former period has there been so much spoken and written about art as at the present time. During the last twenty-five years the output has been enormous; witness the innumerable “Guides to Art,” “Handbooks of Paintings,” “Philosophy of Esthetics,” etc. . . . In London an extremely stupid book, “The Significance of Form,” emanates from a scribbler who has no more idea of the significance of form than a monkey has of the theory of Relativity. So we have a vast flood of current art journals, magazine articles, handbooks on art, and the effusions of impecunious press-hacks—male and female—who pad out the columns of the morning and afternoon dailies and supplements with alleged art criticism.

In America most of the output of books on art is by writers whose literary training was a graduation from a news factory, as ordinary reporters, with no experience in the study of esthetics, no background of culture, no grasp whatsoever of the philosophy of art, and no knowledge of the technique of painting and sculpture.

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In no other channel of human activity has criticism been attempted by those entirely ignorant, both technically and theoretically, of the subject treated. Writers treating of chemistry, engineering or mathematics, in order to obtain a hearing, must have a technical and theoretical knowledge of the subject in hand. But in the arts, any press hack from the flotsam and jetsam of a newspaper factory is delegated to write the criticism of painting or sculpture or the drama, and this output of critical rubbish is accepted by an ignorant public as trustworthy and legitimate guidance in esthetic culture.

In science it is possible to prove the truth of any theory by practical results. If, for example, Edison or any thoroughly trained engineer invents a new process in electricity or mechanics, it is possible in a very short time to test the invention and establish its exact value. If a chemist discovers a new formula in chemistry, that also can be immediately tested. It is not possible in either of the fields of mechanism or chemistry, or in electrical engineering for an untrained and stupid person to make a discovery or invention. The man must have a certain measure of talent, and a technical training is indispensable. The common laborer, who wields a shovel, can not design an electrical plant. The man who washes dishes in a restaurant is incapable of the research

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necessary to the creation of a chemical formula or analysis.

If the laborer and the dish-washer rise up and claim recognition as engineer or chemist, their works will be put to the test and the sure result will be their swift relegation back to the digging and dish-washing. Their claims for mental equality would fall to pieces before the actual demands of utility.

Or, if some stone breaker in the building of the Panama Canal, should claim mental equality with Colonel Goethals, the result would be, if the doctrine of equality were enforced, that all persons engaged in work above the mental capacity of the stone breaker, would have to abandon whatever work they were engaged in, and go to breaking stone, with no one of superior ability to direct how the stone should be used.

Now this is exactly what is taking place in the arts.

In the industrial and scientific work of the world there is a sifting process that is infallible in establishing and valuing the mental state of the people engaged in such work. Each one can be tested according to the results of his work.

The domain of the arts is the only field of human endeavor wherein the claim of mental equality is being realized. A man's claim to be an artist can only be tested by those whose cul-

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ture and knowledge of the arts enable them to discriminate and judge between true and sham art. But there is a very small number capable of such judgment, so small, that they carry no weight at all with the mass of mankind. Consequently, the poor in mind and body, who find it impossible to impose themselves on the utilitarian avocations of the world, turn to the arts, which present a free field, with no danger of detection or any possibility of testing their claims.

Now, any one who has taken sufficient interest in this line of art criticism to get a general impression of it, will note the similarity of style and point of view of the writers. In America there is a spirit of approbation to everything endorsed by dealers and Art Committees. The public having no basis of esthetic culture is dependent on the art critics. The critics, of course, are influenced by the interest of the dealers; as a result, the effusions of the critics in the art columns of the newspapers sometimes bear a close resemblance to the work of the press agent, so potent a factor in the cult of advertising.

In arriving at a basic estimate of the equipments and cultural background of the art critic, the matter of previous environment is important. These cults emerge from two preparatory schools of mental discipline: one, from the college graduate, the other from a newspaper office. The

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college man comes from an environment that according to the testimony of many college professors is very detrimental to a background of esthetic culture. A course in any of the leading universities sterilizes the esthetic instinct in the soul of the average college graduate, unless he is possessed of a great strength of character. If he has a turn for business, he becomes a bond peddler; if he is weak or feminine in his mentality, he may become an art critic. Of all modern conditions the environment of present-day journalism is probably the most detrimental to esthetic culture. So completely is the element of imagination eliminated from the mentality of the average journalist, that his sense of economic justice may become aroused to the extent of his becoming a socialist, without in the least awakening a trace of the esthetic ideal of love and beauty. So equipped, the art critic is set to the task of interpreting to the people the meaning of art.

The Press has graduated a long line of brilliant authors from Mark Twain to Walter Lippmann—poets, diplomats, publicists and financiers. Walt Whitman was a journalist. James Whitcomb Riley served an apprenticeship as a newspaper man, and so with Eugene Field, John Hay, Bret Harte and many others. After this record of splendid talent emerging from

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journalism, why has it thrown out the incredible mediocrity that issues as art critics?

In no line of writing does the deficiency of a sense of form so betray itself as in pseudo art criticism. In writing in prose, poetry or the drama, it is possible, with the aid of encyclopedias and skillful pilfering of other men's ideas to give a readable presentation in a book review of a poem or drama, which though monotonous and dull, will pass muster with the bourgeois culture. In the arts of painting and sculpture also such a procedure may be followed in discussing past epochs. Any scrub press-hack can get together a readable essay on the Italian Renaissance or Dutch paintings, by compiling from a wide range of authors of ability. It is when the journalist turns art critic and attempts a concrete dissertation on pictures or statuary actually on exhibition that he goes bankrupt.

In addition to the shackles imposed upon him by the influence of his environment the pseudo art critic finds his every movement controlled by the exigencies of the trade. First of all he must be entirely subservient to the picture dealer. In presenting matter for the art columns of the newspapers the critic is called upon to do the exhibitions. First and most important are the dealers' exhibitions. Scattered up and down Fifth Avenue are various picture shops called

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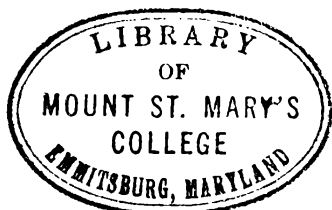
by courtesy of the press "galleries." The character of exhibitions in these "galleries" ranges from collections of modernistic art, French landscapes and figures, to exhibitions of old masters, some of them fakes; and of society portrait painters, with interludes of American landscapes of the conventional saleable kind, with here and there a dash of French impressionism.

Some of these exhibitions are entirely devoted to modernistic art so atrocious, that even the most confirmed press hack might be inclined to condemn. Yet one and all the writers of art columns in the dailies must indiscriminately praise the fake old master, the unspeakable society portrait, the machine made Dutch pot-boiler and the meretricious landscape; all of which must be presented to the public as the real thing in their respective lines. Let any one of the writers on art attempt to tell the truth about any single picture in one of these exhibitions and he will at once hear from the business end of his newspaper; and if he does not lose his job, he will receive a jar which will insure in the future a proper recognition of the exigencies of traffic for profit.

The necessary requirements of an art critic are so exacting that so far there have been only two real masters in this line of writing of the Anglo-Saxon race, Ruskin and Walter Pater.

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While Ruskin had certain shortcomings he, more than any other Englishman who has written on art, possessed the necessary equipment of an art critic. He possessed archeological learning and an understanding of the effects of economic conditions on the development of esthetics. This knowledge of economics led to a conviction of the entirely destructive influence of modern industrialism on the arts. In addition to this, Ruskin possessed a keen plastic instinct or sense of form, which, joined to a fairly good training in drawing, enabled him to judge rightly of the merits of drawing. He had also a clear perception of the power of imagination as manifested in composition or design. Finally, he had an understanding of the great classic works of the ancient and modern literatures. To sum up, Ruskin as an ideal art critic was highly gifted with a power of realizing clearly defined mental concepts, a plastic instinct which enabled him to recognize the mastery of figure painting as manifested in the works of Tintoretto and the great Italians, also of reading aright the lesson of history in its relation to art. In all these attributes the present art critics are lacking. Still more does their lack of the plastic instinct render them incompetent to judge or differentiate form in painting and sculpture. As for history and the classics, their knowledge of these departments of



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literature is a compound of encyclopedic data and extracts—always excepting Mr. Royal Cortissoz and perhaps one or two others.

I have observed that critics of the drama have a better understanding of their subject than critics of painting and sculpture. The reason for the superiority of the dramatic critic is that most of the plays presented on the stage are themes of American life; that is, the only phase of American life known to New Yorkers, the principal setting of which is Long Island, New York City and its suburbs. Now the haunts of the critic are mostly confined to the above range. He is part of that life, he is familiar at first hand with the thin anemic current of existence that passes for life in New York and Long Island, with its colorless amours, its squalid fornications and its sham culture.

The dramatic critic has trailed the night clubs, the gay resorts on Long Island, where married cocottes bask on the beaches in one-piece bathing suits, planning a third or fourth divorce with alimony. So the dramatic critic is well equipped to judge of the merits of a presentation of American life. On the other hand, the critic of the plastic arts is projected into a strange world wherein to find his way—an uncharted world. He is bewildered, he is set to the task of translating a language of which he cannot speak one

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word. The art critic then plays the game of Blind Man's Buff in the world of art. He is engaged in contortions and in grabbing hands full of air. His unconscious buffoonery furnishes great amusement to those who know better.

The painters and sculptors of modernist art who choose degenerate types of human wreckage as themes for their creations are often reflecting their own personality and character in their works. The personality and habits of these degenerate artists seem to have a peculiar fascination for certain writers on art. The response to the abnormal lives of these human derelicts presents an interesting problem in psychopathy in searching for the reasons for the ecstatic adulation of degenerate artists and their works.

The reason for this strange obsession must lie deeper than the requirements of mere space writing. Why are critics fascinated by the personal degeneracy of Van Gogh, Modigliani and Gauguin, who described his wife, a respectable woman, as a bourgeois sow? "He cared only for women who were fat and vicious"; "his tastes ran to prostitutes and negresses"—such is some of the information supplied us by a eulogist!

Panegyrics of Van Gogh, Modigliani and Gauguin were written by art critics and published in editions de luxe more expensive than

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the books treating of the works of David, Ingres or Delacroix.

The following examples illustrating this strange fascination may be interesting and instructive. Mr. Thomas Craven, in an appreciation of Van Gogh in "Modern Art," says:

"Psychoanalysts, who know all about the workings of exceptional minds, have told us that Vincent had an inferiority complex. Perhaps, but if he was so afflicted, then Christ too had an inferiority complex. The two had much in common."

What was it that Van Gogh had in common with Christ? This classing Van Gogh with Christ by one of our art "authorities" will interest orthodox Christians.

Van Gogh drifted to Paris where he met Gauguin, Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, Seurat and the floating human wreckage of Montmartre. One day Van Gogh and Gauguin were walking together and discussing art, when Gauguin said: "Forget your stupid artists, let us call on the girls."

"They entered the brothel together and the girls crowded around them. Gauguin was the center of attraction. He was hand-

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some and strong and the girls fought over him; each hoping to get him for her lover. He knew how to handle women—he had been liberally educated in the brothels of many lands. A wheedling little brunette took pity on Vincent, caressed and teased him and begged him to give her a five-franc piece. ‘And if you can’t do that,’ she cried, pulling his ears, ‘you might at least give me one of your big ears for a Christmas present,’ The kindly Madame came in and the room shook with laughter.”

The beneficent presence of the “kindly Madame” evidently turned the subject to one less gruesome and more in keeping with the business of the house.

“About midnight there was great excitement at the brothel. The porter brought in a package for the little brunette, a Christmas present delivered at the door by Monsieur, the nutty Redhead. The girls gathered in a circle and the package was opened. One wrapper after another, and at last, a blood soaked piece of canvas containing a large human ear. The brunette fainted and Madame notified the police.”

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Afterwards, says Mr. Craven, Van Gogh returned and asked forgiveness of Madame and the girls.

Finally Van Gogh landed in an insane asylum; during his sojourn there he painted a picture, a landscape which inspires Mr. Craven to the following panegyric:

“He painted ‘The Ravine’—one of his masterpieces—in which the earth lifts itself in hurtling agony, and mounts higher and higher in a convulsion of forms. These pictures are not the disordered litter of a lunatic’s mind; they are the compacted symbols of the life of the painter who was also a poet, the symbols of his love, his agitations, his sunshine and his sufferings—of the terror and tragedy of his superhuman effort and sensibility.”

In conclusion, consummating a wasted life with a woeful death, Van Gogh committed suicide. Mr. Craven says:

“They buried him at Anvers, in the cemetery between the cornfields, and docteur Gachet planted sunflowers round the grave in honor of the great soul that rested there.”

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In a recently published novel entitled "The Lust for Life," Van Gogh was lauded as a hero and a genius, who was, like Cézanne, a victim of "frustrated effort."

Now, the life of Van Gogh was essentially a lust for death and putrescence.

Another star among Mr. Craven's heroes of frustrated effort is Modigliani, a diseased drunkard and dope fiend, living off the earnings of the depraved street walkers of Montmartre. Modigliani was in a Paris café, relates Mr. Craven, and:—

"Accompanied by a seductive blonde who paid for his pile of saucers, he was a youth of striking appearance, spiritually and physically irresponsible—a son of Montmartre. One could tell from his long untidy hair and his clothes that he was an artist. Instead of a tie he wore a handkerchief of red silk; instead of a coat, an old jersey, a gift, and much too big for him; and his corduroy slacks were spattered with paint. One could read in the unnatural luster of his eyes, and in his sunken cheeks, the marks of pulmonary affliction which had been aggravated by a diet of cognac and hashish."

He quarreled with some others in the café. Suddenly:—

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“He was prepared to kill, but the blonde, satisfied with a moral victory, led him to the door. Outside she whispered sweet things about his manhood, and he smiled gratefully—he was weak where women were concerned. She took him to one of those dives frequented by forlorn artists and cast-off women, where world-sick wretches, who have never the price of a square meal, manage somehow to pay cash for narcotic relief.”

Modigliani found his first inspiration in the aboriginal carvings of negroes. The ugly obscene diabolism of these rude statues seem to exercise a strange fascination for the devotees of modernistic art.

“One look at the black statues and his imagination conquered his indolence. He saw in them the foundation of the formal vision he had longed for; their curious distortions and expressions of childish fears and pathetic innocence corresponded to his own distorted existence—his despairs and his morbid sentimentality; he had at last a structural device adaptable to his pure and wistful conception.”

Modigliani's life in Paris is further described:

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“Lonely and unfit for military service, he tramped the quarter, drinking more and more to forget his misery. Early one morning, dead drunk, he staggered along the street to his garret, stopping now and then, to serenade the sleeping inhabitants with sad Italian lullabies. He consorted with crooks and jailbirds to obtain drugs, and doped himself into insensibility. Half-sentient, he raved and suffered from visions, conversed with imaginary people, and discovered devils in street cars.”

Mr. Craven's laudatory comments on the wretched sadistic daubs of his hero, are as follows:

“His art is extremely personal and real, and if not profoundly moving, then always touching, and in its own sphere, singularly complete. His nudes, slender, elongated girls of virginal innocence, were girls he had slept with; but he managed, despite the rigid African formula he practiced, to catch them in attitudes of unexpected purity, and to bring out in face and figure, the delicacy of his own feelings.”

Mr. Craven then creates a Montmartre idyll of Modigliani's numerous amours:

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“The girl ran away from home to be near him, and to share his life—what was left of it. They lived together in the most dreadful circumstances, a homeless pair, sleeping on the ground, in bars, and in the studios of artists who had nothing to give them but floor space; they lived in cafés, accepting crusts from charitable waiters and hawking their pictures on the pavement; they roamed the quarter, begging, sponging, suffering—the girl doing the begging.”

Modigliani died in a charity ward of a Paris hospital:

“On the night of Modigliani’s death, his mistress, Jeanne Hebuterne, pregnant the second time, killed herself by leaping to the ground from a fifth story window.”

I repeat, what is the fascination that attracts the art critics to the sordid lives and sadistic paintings and sculpture of the squalid degenerates of modernistic art? If these artists had produced masterpieces there would be no cavil at their drunkenness and whoring; the private life of a genius would be no concern of the public’s, provided the genius made such contribution to human culture as did Benvenuto Cellini, François Villon or Baudelaire. But the output of

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modernist art is, from an esthetic standpoint, entirely worthless, and in a few years, will be equally worthless from a money standpoint. It is amazing that the work of the mental derelicts of modernistic art should be taken seriously. Certainly, no man or woman of normal mental health would be attracted by the sadistic obscene deformations in the paintings of Cézanne, Modigliani, Matisse, Gauguin and other "Fauves."

One excuse put forth for the monstrosities of modernistic art, is that it expresses the spirit of the age. This is the most pessimistic indictment of present conditions so far known. Is it possible that the human race has sunk to the level of degradation expressed in the obscene sadism of Cézanne, Picasso, Matisse and the whole tribe of modernists? No doubt the machine age has evoked a reign of ugliness and vulgarity and so atrophied the sense of beauty in the minds of the people, but in the most hopeless mood of pessimism one could never visualize the American people reaching the state of spiritual leprosy symbolized in the monstrous abortions of modernistic art.

Another example of the fascination of degenerate art for the writers is furnished in the panegyrics of Orozco's murals in Dartmouth College, by Lewis Mumford, in the *New Republic* of October 10th, 1934. The themes of these

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murals are a combination of Bolshevism, pacifism, atheism and revolt, and destruction of all former traditions, reeking with the spirit of hatred and vengeance against society and government, the whole permeated with the spirit of sadism and cruelty, with mutilation and debasement of the human figure. In the execution of the theme the composition is like that of Rivera, stupid and incoherent, the drawing clumsy and ignorant, evidencing the work of a man not half trained in the necessary discipline of a competent artist. This disorderly fumble of Bolshevik symbols and sadistic deformations is spread by Orozco on the walls of an institution that was founded and is supported by the system he is attempting in his mad frenzy to destroy.

Of what manner of men are the faculty and trustees of Dartmouth? Do they propose to make Dartmouth a center of propaganda for Bolshevism? I can see no other reason for desecrating the walls of their college with the monstrous sadism and treason in Orozco's depraved murals.

The panegyric delivered by Mr. Mumford is true to form of the Bolshevik writers who are all in a chronic state of revolt, against all order and beauty. An additional stimulus to the revolt against beauty is the shadow of the Marquis de Sade.

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The poor results in culture of college training, as it emerges in art criticism, raises a vital question. Is it the fault of a defective system, or is it the result of the average low mentality of the students, or perhaps the incompetent professors? Has the democratic leveling down process been lowered to fit the low grade mentality of the vast majority, the mob?

Obedient to the American fetish of bigness and quantity production, it is possible that the standard of scholarship and culture has been so lowered that the men of talent in the college are sacrificed to the mob. It is evident that this result is inevitable under the present system, based as it is on the false theory that all men and women are equal, and that all can be educated. Therefore our educators must face the problem of adapting their standards to a low grade of mentality—a universal mentality wherein all those of superior mental gifts must conform to Walt Whitman's divine average.

Thus Democracy will run true to form. The influence of Democracy applied to the educational system works harmoniously with the universal monotony of thought and life induced by the machine cycle. Together they develop gradual atrophy and inertia of the mental volition, which may account for the hopeless sterility of creative talent in our college graduates. We

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have been fed up on the theory that when all the people are educated, Utopia will arrive. Very fine; but what manner of education? Genghis Khan's people were perfectly educated for the work they had to do.

The ratio of esthetic culture in the present American ruling class was well set forth in the recent adventure of the Government in the domain of the arts. A dragnet was cast out into the ocean of Democracy to catch artistic fish. The net drew in shoals of minnows and a few small fishes. Out of the shoal of 15,000 minnows, there was selected six hundred of what were considered sizeable fish; that is, six hundred paintings were selected as being the best from the myriads that were sent in; the six hundred were then thinned to one hundred and fifty-six, which were exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art.

From the character of the one hundred and fifty-six paintings on exhibition it would be quite safe to assume that the remaining 14,844 were entirely worthless from a money or esthetic point of view. Of the hundred and fifty-six paintings exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art not more than ten or twelve would fetch as much as \$100 each, if offered at public sale. For the one hundred and fifty-six paintings, the Government paid \$1,400,000, which brings the cost of each

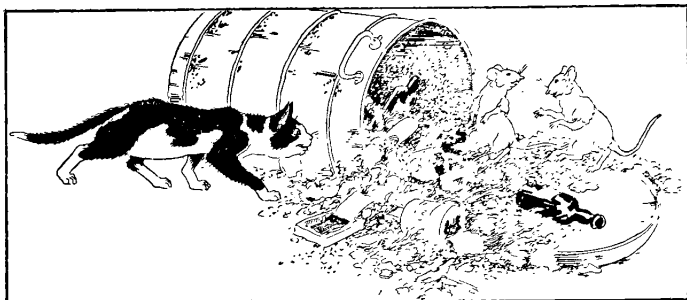
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painting to \$8,975! Of the above sum very little went to artists of known reputation.

“Stick your hands in your pockets, Jonathan
—you are a made man from this day,
You are mighty cute—and here is one of
your bargains.”

WALT WHITMAN: “Leaves of Grass.”





2. *The Environment of the Commonplace*

The environment of the commonplace and the banal, created by the utilitarianism of the industrial revolution, is a form of negation which, besides establishing a reign of ugliness, has left a far-reaching influence on the everyday lives and mentality of the American people. The Machine Age has molded their lives and their mental perceptions, their joys and sorrows, their crimes and virtues, in the patterns and forms of their typewriters, their vacuum cleaners, their Ford lizzies, their flying machines and radios, reducing their everyday existence to the lowest common denominator of the commonplace and banal.

In this respect, there is no difference between the owner of the Ford and the millionaire who rides in a Rolls-Royce: they are brothers and sisters under the skin, with the banality of the millionaire more conspicuous and glaring. There

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is no more sterile place in the world, in respect of esthetic culture, than Park Avenue or Newport.

Life, with its accompanying monotony in America, has really become so commonplace, that it is no longer tragic. It is pathetic and comic, but not tragic. The terror and dignity of death become only the dust and ashes of a consumed rubbish heap. In fact, we are in danger of being transformed into a nation of clodhoppers. Consequently, American tragedy is impossible. The fiction produced in the last twenty years, records a very banal, sordid existence. The later fiction, by those high priests of the banal, Messrs. Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair and their imitators, is neither pathetic nor comic. Some of it is spiced with the obscenities of the commonplace, which is not American, or any other kind, of tragedy. Catastrophe only becomes tragedy when the men and women involved are of superior mentality and station, whose stake in life is more than mere animal existence. The principal figures in the tragedies of the great poets are men and women of high estate, wherein loss of position, of caste, or of mind, is a greater loss than life.

For example, in the case of Don Quixote, his mania involved the wreck of a fine mind and superior character. This was a tragedy. If

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Sancho Panza had become possessed of a mania, it might have been comic or pathetic, but could never have been tragic. Aside from his connection with Don Quixote, he was of no interest.

Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, outlines the proper requirements for a tragic figure:

“A man who is not eminently good, yet whose misfortune is brought about, not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty, must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous, a personage like Oedipus or Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families. It must be a life rich and full humanity, composed of elements which other men possess but blended more harmoniously or of more potent quality; he is a prince, or a famous man, who falls from a height of greatness.”

Dickens was a chronicler of clodhoppers, but he played upon the comic and pathetic with infinite art. None of his characters impresses one as tragic. The squalid meanness of a Bill Sykes or a Fagin precludes them from tragedy. Neither Mr. Peggotty nor Little Nell nor Caleb Plummer are tragic; they are pathetic with a true pathos. Thackeray achieved a tragic figure in the character of Colonel Newcome.

The writers of current fiction, based on present day life, might well and truly claim that there is nothing but the banal to write about. This not

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only exemplifies our poverty of existence in America, but it also proves our contention. The presentation of this existence in current fiction reënforces and completes the mental reaction to the commonplace, visualized in current fiction. There is no real tragedy in American life. The present generation in America will probably witness the death of Tragedy.

But the tabloids and sensational newspapers are a powerful auxiliary to the current fiction. The current fiction and the tabloids, therefore, may be rated as contributions to an environment making for an inferiority complex.

The influence of a machine age environment, in addition to reducing American life to an existence of boredom, operates also to exert a distinctly criminal influence on the inhabitants of our cities.

In an address to the Fine Arts Faculty of Columbia University, Professor George J. Cox pointed out:

“There is a very direct and vital relation between art and ethics in that immensely important and vast field, civic art, which covers everything from garbage cans to civic halls, from stoplights and sky signs to schools and colleges. . . .

“I am not prepared to admit that an esthetic person is necessarily an ethical one, but what a

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speculation the condition of our cities and the state of city politics conjures up!

“Here in this city, with its utterly planless piling up of monster buildings, with its endless grids of bleak slums, whether on Park Avenue or Eighth Avenue, its monotonous iterations of lifeless concrete, stone and steel, of sky signs and screaming advertisements, its eradication of the last vestige of spring and fall, its rooting up of trees and grass as though they were pests—all this denial of beauty destroys the essential roots of humanity.

“When we compare New York’s drab immensity, or any other city’s ugliness, with the still surviving beauty of some old cities in Massachusetts, Ohio or Virginia, what sort of interest in civic ethics can we expect citizens to take—what sort of pride is roused in the breast of an inhabitant of 125th Street or 121st Street for that matter?

“Here, then in the amenities of our towns, in the preservation of natural beauties and the creation of those which art supplies, is a matter touching the heart of our ethics, for the ethics of a community not prepared to make sacrifices for art are already atrophied, almost past paying for, and scarcely worth saving. Look at our roads, befouled with hoardings, billboards and a welter of ghastly tin advertisements!

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“I am not advocating a return to turnpikes, buggies, bustles and beaver hats, but I do say that when great roads, magnificently engineered, are driven through this country, art should play its part and do the thing triumphantly, with dignity and pride in its own times, and respect for the amenities of the countryside and whatever emblems of an earlier and, in many ways more beautiful civilization, may yet survive. Instead, we make slatterns of the native beauty spots.”

The environment of the present machine age makes for an atrophy of the emotions and passions; as a consequence the power of resistance to tyranny is weakened, or else our mental perceptions are blunted so we do not recognize tyranny when it appears. For example, we endured the tyranny of Prohibition for years and finally perhaps the most effective reason urged for Repeal was the necessity for additional taxes. To abate our income taxes—the problem touched our pockets; we sprang to arms.

Then our mental obtuseness in regard to rackets. In addition to the prohibition racket we have the moving picture racket with its enormous influence in corrupting the minds of old and young. This particular racket has been fully exposed by the researches of the Payne Fund and the very able synopsis of that research, “Our

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Movie-Made Children," by Mr. Henry James Forman.

Then there is the racket of modernistic art, an enormous swindle, imported from Europe and imposed on Americans with more money than brains. Then, last but not least, there is the gangster-bandit racket, a condition exactly similar to that which existed in Sicily for many years. In less than one year Mussolini put an end to the Maffia. We could end our gangster racket if we really wanted to end it, but the stupid inertia of the people, the activity of the lawyers who furnish the corrupt gangster with a magazine of suspended sentences, and elected judges, all contribute to the present immunity of the gangster-bandit racket.

Then there are the Castrata that sit on Parole Boards who are moved to pity for the criminal and forget his victim; also the sob-sisters, male and female reformers, who reform the criminal, get him out of prison, and he promptly goes back and does business at the old stand.

It is evident that our environment of spiritual and material ugliness operates to blunt our perceptions and destroy our power of discrimination.

There is a Greek proverb that says: "He who lacks the power of discrimination loses all."

The reign of universal ugliness must react on

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the passions, the emotions, the impulses and tastes of our people, to reduce them all to an average dead level of inertia which is the ultimate triumph of the machine age and its handmaiden Democracy.

The enormous amount of literature on the subject of sex extant in America would give the impression to a stranger on our shores that Americans were going sex mad. One reason for this is that it is only within the period since the war that the Americans became really sex conscious, chiefly through the movies and the works of D. H. Lawrence. But the sex consciousness of the Americans derived from these sources is anemic and squalid. As expressed in literature and on the stage, it lacks entirely the Dionysian element; neither does it reflect the love-making of the gods. It consists in the amours of the commonplace. A good example of the American concept of love was furnished by a play entitled "When Ladies Meet." This play was a success with both critics and audiences. The two principal characters in the play, a lady with literary ambition and a publisher, were engaged in a clandestine love affair. Their contacts in this amour were entirely destitute of passion, emotion or impulse. Those contacts were as sterile of the abandon of a real grand passion as that of a collision of two hat racks. The most

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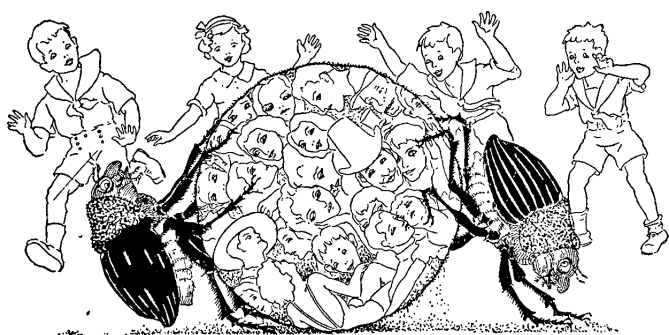
strait-laced Christian Endeavorer would find nothing objectionable in their touch-me-not attitudes.

Of course there is a truism that before an author or an artist or an actor can express the Dionysian abandon of illicit love in a play or poem or painting, the author or artist must have experienced such abandon. It is a safe bet that the author and actors of "When Ladies Meet," have had no such experience. However, the play expressed perfectly the American nature in the matter of sex. This play was profusely lauded by critics, and justly so, for the play reflected the anemic squalor of the sex consciousness of the critics. The soul of the critic responded to the feebleness of love content in the souls of the two principal characters in the play. As with the critics, so with the audience. The critic can never detect in a work of art the same flaws and defects that exist in his own soul. In short, that which is hidden in the soul of the critics responds to its parallel when expressed in a work of art.

That play very well expressed the joylessness of the American love-making. We lack the fullness of life, the Dionysian element in existence; we need a more sensuous—not sensual—acceptance of the virility of the cosmos. By dint of the influence of Puritanism, our inheritance from the English, and our machine environment is

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created an atrophy. We have drifted into a drab, anemic state, a negative colorless way of life, which is well set forth in the play "When Ladies Meet." Here we have an example of the deadening influence of our machine environment on our emotions and passions, sterilizing the very fountain of life.



3. *The Demand for Reality*

In order that life may be a fine spectacle, its play must be played well. But for that purpose good actors are required.

—NIETZSCHE: "Thus Spake Zarathustra."

A FAMILIAR cry that now reaches the ears of listeners is the demand that American subjects be painted. In short, the artist must address himself to reproducing the contemporary life of his time; history, allegory and religion, abstract themes, such as love, death, life, joy, passion, or themes inspired by the great classic poets, all are to be tabooed for the everyday life of the time in which the artist lives. Such a claim is very absurd. It is the cry of those who would reduce the arts to a mere mechanical photographic reproduction of the deadly dull commonplace of the present humdrum life. Such a cry is an attempt to establish the limitations of a consciousness destitute of imagination and to erect a standard of esthetics wherein only the inept, the stupid and the mechanical automaton may be supreme. If such a standard had existed in the past, most of the great art of the world would have been ruled out and nearly all the poetic and

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musical creations would never have been called into being. Take a few representative works of the Greeks: for example, "The Battle of the Amazons." Nothing of the kind really occurred. Then, another theme of battle, that of the "Centaur and Lapithæ." Or the "Twelve Labors of Hercules"—all symbolism. With the exception of the Pan-Athenian procession on the frieze of the Parthenon very little of the Greek art, whether on vases, sarcophagi or temples, was taken from contemporary life. The two pediments of the Parthenon are pure allegories, having no connection whatever with the everyday life of the people, except in the way of symbolism. Then there is the Egyptian Sphinx, that mysterious combination of man, animal, bird and reptile, symbolical of earth, water and air. Some Egyptian jingo might have happened along mouthing the conventional "Egypt for the Egyptians" and "to Hell with Greece," "Give us Egyptian subjects" or, "No Egyptian ever looked like that, with the claws of an animal and the wings of a bird." It is quite impossible to imagine such an occurrence at that time. It remained for twentieth-century America to produce this specimen of mental obtuseness.

Most of the Italian art is devoted to religion and allegory, imaginative and poetic, and for that reason it reached a higher degree of tech-

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nical excellence than other schools that confined themselves to rendering the contemporary life of that time. For it is a true principle in all forms of art that the man with imagination can, if he will, do a better still life study or portrait than the so-called realist. For example, no realist ever came within leagues of equaling the truth of form manifested in Michael Angelo's or Raphael's work. The portraits by Titian or Raphael are noble and more personal than those of the Dutch school, or even of Velasquez. The creative imagination of Rembrandt enabled him to produce portraits enormously superior to his contemporaries Van der Helst and Franz Hals, who confined themselves to native subjects.

The works of Watts, the whole of the pre-Raphaelite school, the paintings of history and allegory by Leighton and the designs of William Blake, all would be ruled out by this cult of ignorance that bellows forth its claims for painting contemporary life as it is. Nearly all of the best work of the French school of the last century would be rejected on the same grounds. History, allegory and religious art, the creations of Dante, Milton, and most of Shakespeare's works would all go down before the Bottoms and Starvelings who, out of their proper element, venture into the domain of art criticism.

The work of Millet was based upon the prin-

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ciples involved in the art of Michael Angelo and Rembrandt, both of whom he understood better than any other modern painter. His paintings are a series of allegories of the labors of agriculture, and in a still more symbolic sense, the struggle of man for existence with the forces of nature. Millet was enabled to produce these allegories with their powerful abstractions by having for years immersed himself in the sentiment and spirit of Greek and Italian art. Most of the others who have attempted to paint French peasants have merely made illustrations. With few exceptions, a perfected color photograph would have answered the purpose of these modern realists equally well. Millet incorporated the element of symbolism in his work. His paintings, while based on the truest perception of nature and of great plastic power, were symbols.

One hears much these days about the subject in painting. The question, then, is posed: what determines the proper function of the artist? The communist insists that all art must be employed in the service and glorification of the working class, *a la Rivera!* Tolstoi said painting and sculpture should only be employed in the service of human brotherhood and good will among men—a religious art. All such definitions are worthless; the moment a painting becomes

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didactic, enters in the service of religious or political propaganda, it relapses into ugliness, as witness the soviet art and the clumsy daubs of Rivera and Orozco, and their clodhopper imitators, so much admired by Mr. Craven.

It may be urged that the religious pictures of the Renaissance artists were didactic, proclaiming Christianity. No; the paintings were symbolic, which is quite a different thing from propaganda. Carlyle said that all true works of art are symbols. To the advocates of the realistic representation of contemporary life, symbolism in a work of art is entirely unintelligible. Their consciousness is developed only to that stage of perception limited to a cognition of objects familiarized by daily association, such as cabbages, fruit, and the material utilities of life. In short, the mind of a child, without the child's inherent possibilities for mental evolution.

The esthetic value of painting is determined by a definite standard present in all great paintings. First, that the painting shall be well executed, which means sound drawing and design, expressive of the chosen theme, and color and form true to nature. Second, that the picture shall be a symbol in that the action expressed, shall have a universal meaning and not be bounded by a detailed incident. Third, that

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the painting be beautiful and the representations of figures or accessories be true to nature.

All great paintings possess the above elements, even though the themes be tragic, such, for example, as "The Entombment of Christ" by Titian, "The Crusaders" by Delacroix in the Louvre, and "The Descent From the Cross" by Rubens in Antwerp. All of these masterpieces are supremely beautiful and all are supremely true to natural forms, which were neither abstract nor archaic.

The "Venus de Milo" and Michael Angelo's "Moses" are symbols; they are both masterpieces of realism, as representing the highest type of man and woman. "Moses" is the symbol of the Lawgiver and the Ruler. The "Venus de Milo," symbol of the virile female principle in the universe—the superman-and-woman of Nietzsche and Walt Whitman. All these masterpieces are examples of the higher realism, the true realism.

A painting by Franz Hals or Jan Stien, or a study of fish by Chase, are also true realism, and beautiful, but without the universal spiritual content of the higher types. The difference lies in that, whereas, in the works of the Dutch masters and Chase realism was the sole end and aim of the artists, in the work of Rubens and Titian realism is only the means to an end which

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is spiritual. Both types of art, however, require a mastery of drawing and design and a penetration into the mystery of light, all of which is entirely lacking in modernistic art.

To the advocates of painting the subjects of contemporary life, I say with all my heart, go to it! If you present the occupations of everyday life as did the seventeenth century's Dutch artists or the French Chardin; if you will execute an interior equal to Vermeer, I will take off my hat to you. For the present I will keep it on. If any of you will represent the laboring man as did Millet, I will take my hat off and keep it off. Or, if some of you will record the anemic amours of the jazzy flirts and stock-broker gigolos of the New York and Long Island smart set with the skill and power of Hogarth in the Rake's Progress, I will join in a universal applause. If the frustrated Rivera had executed his proletarian fumbling at Radio City with the color and virtuosity of Rubens's "Kermesse" in the Louvre, its obliteration would have been a calamity. As it turned out, the people of New York owe a vote of thanks to Mr. Rockefeller for eliminating one of the worst examples of painting ever executed.

In all great art epochs the themes for painting and sculpture were chosen from religion, mythology, history or the tragic poets; the contem-

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porary life of the time did not concern the great artists of Greece or Italy or France. The vogue of Manet and the modern delineators of the current life responds to the demands of the mob: the mob clamors for the commonplace in art allied to the propaganda for revolt.



CHAPTER III

Mayan Art

I say the human shape or face is so great, it must never be made ridiculous;

I say for ornaments nothing outré can be allowed.
And I say that clean-shaped children can be jetted
and conceived only where natural forms prevail
in public, and the human face and form are
never caricatured.

—WALT WHITMAN: "Leaves of Grass."

THE latter part of the eighteenth century, preceding the Revolution, was a period of literary revolt in France. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and other writers of less renown were sowing the seeds that later on sprouted into revolution against the existing order of the human institutions of church and state.

Appearing at this epoch was another writer of

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revolt who directed his assault against the divine institution of the orthodox God, toward the destruction of the accepted canons of ethics and moralities, and the substitution of a, to him, more powerful deity, who represented the principle of evil.

The basis of the philosophy of the Marquis de Sade is the thesis that the principle of evil in the universe is the superior power; that this evil always triumphs; that good, virtue, is always defeated; that nature being the active principle of evil, inflicts torture and is merciless, cruel and ruthless; that, therefore, to be in harmony with nature, with the cosmos, it is necessary to practice vice, to inflict torture and to rejoice in scenes of suffering and death.

The Marquis de Sade in his philosophy reversed the axioms of Jean-Jacques that "Everything is good, everything is the work of God"—to "Everything is the work of Satan, everything is evil."

This is expressed in the following paraphrase by Swinburne from De Sade's masterpiece, "Justine":

"Nature averse to crime? I tell you, nature lives and breathes by it; hungers at all her pores for bloodshed, aches in all her nerves for the help of sin, yearns with all

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her heart for the furtherance of cruelty. Nature forbid that thing or this? Nay, the best or worst of you will never go so far as she would have you; no criminal will come up to the measure of her crimes, no destruction seems to her destructive enough. We, when we could do evil, can disorganize a little matter, shed a little blood, quench a little breath at the door of a perishable body. This we can do and call it crime. Unnatural, is it? Good friend, it is by criminal things and deeds unnatural that nature works and moves and has her being. Behold, the ages of men are dead at her feet. The blood of the world is on her hands; and her desire is continually toward evil, that she may see the end of things she hath made. Friends, if we would be one with nature, let us continually do evil with all our might."

This is indeed a gruesome philosophy and no doubt it influenced the brilliant minds of Baudelaire and Huysmans in France, Swinburne and Oscar Wilde in England and d'Annunzio in Italy.

Both authors and artists of the romantic period in France were fascinated by themes of tragedy. The fine genius of Delacroix and Gericault issued in such masterpieces as the "Barque

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de Dante," the "Crusaders at Constantinople," and the "Raft of the Medusa." The works of the masters of the Romantic epoch in painting, while depicting scenes of violence and death, always involved a grandeur of design, a plastic sense of form and a normal regard for the beauty of the human figure. The legends of antique tragedy when vivified by the genius of Flaubert, Théophile Gautier and Huysmans created masterpieces such as "Salambô," the "Nuit de Cléopâtre" and "Le Roi Candaule." But a fatality of inevitable catastrophe seemed to envelop their creations, the shadow of death was over all.

In England the brilliant poet Swinburne was equally influenced with Baudelaire by the sadistic philosophy; so too were Oscar Wilde and the artist Aubrey Beardsley.

It may be noted that the writers were more strongly influenced than the painters, in the sense that the painters maintained throughout the classic ideal of beauty, which separated them definitively from the sadistic cult, inaugurated by the *Salôn des Independants*.

One of the most absurd claims of the modernists is that they stem in a direct line from Ingres. Of all the French artists of the nineteenth century, Ingres was an artist whose work and theory of art were most markedly a condemnation and negation of the clumsy, formless drawing of

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the modernists. The favorite motto of Ingres, "drawing is the probity of art," is quite enough to clear him of the suspicion of any connection with the modernistic apaches.

Baudelaire and Swinburne, who were most influenced by the Marquis de Sade, never sacrificed the beauties of language, as is the case with modernists such as Gertrude Stein, Joyce and Cummings.

The limited period of Impressionism prepared the way for the advent of the modernists. The journalists in exploiting the merits of the Impressionists, attacked the Academy and the Institute with great ferocity, thus paving the way for the advent of the "fauves."

The first influence of the cult of the Marquis de Sade in painting made its appearance in 1884, when the *Salôn des Independants* was organized. The first exhibition of this Society was largely composed of pictures that had been refused by the official *Salôn*. Most of them were badly drawn, obscene, and far below the standard of normal art established in the *Salôn des Artistes Français*, and conserved by the Institute of France.

The annual exhibitions of the *Salôn des Independants* continued with few intervals until 1890. By that time it was fairly established.

In the year of the World's Fair, the exhibition

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of the *Salôn des Independants* was signalized by the advent of Cézanne as an exhibitor. This completed the baptism of this Society in the mephitic flood of sadistic idolatry which has since submerged the *Salôn des Independants*.

The introduction to the public of the sadistic art of the *Salôn des Independants* in the eighties was subsequently augmented by the discovery of Gauguin, Matisse, Van Gogh, Picasso, and others of the sadistic cult, which grew vigorously, until in 1934 it occupied the Grand Palais with the enormous number of 4,623 works on exhibition.

In viewing this immense output one gains the impression that the exhibition has arrived at the utopia of the communistic fanatics. Here at last a measure of equality is achieved, there is an entire unanimity in the pursuit of ugliness, of obscenity, a monotonous dead level of a low mediocrity, of gangrenous color, malformation of form, an intense negation of order and proportion; in short, the orgies of inferior minds.

The rise of the sadistic cult, with its beginnings and progress in the *Salôn des Independants*, and its spread over the world indicates that the sadistic instinct is congenital in certain portions of the human race, like the instinct for drunkenness and gambling; that the monstrous

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urge to ugliness and mutilation is an inherent part in certain specimens of human nature.

While the instinct for sadism had been manifested in individuals in historic times, there is, however, no record of its being developed into a cult in European nations before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when it became the basic creed of modernistic art. But modernistic art has no tradition, such as other cultures possessed.

This want has been supplied. It has been supplied by the discovery in Central America of a prehistoric race with an advanced civilization whose basic philosophy was the belief in the superiority of evil, and whose ideals in art were ugliness, obscenity, malformations and torture—the salient feature of modernistic art!

It has been noted that the sculptures of the ancient Maya civilization in Central America exercise a peculiar fascination for the devotees of modernistic art, far beyond a legitimate interest in archeology. It may be interesting to examine the reasons for their attraction to Mayan art.

The Maya sculpture is almost invariably hideously ugly, representing the human figure malformed and often mutilated. The ritual of Maya religion involved human sacrifices accompanied by torture.

It will be interesting to learn something of the habits and religion of a race that furnished the

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only record in history of a cult of evil up to the rise of the modernist art movement; of a race that, after a considerable degree of civilization, developed a sadistic cult of deification of ugliness and obscenity so very similar to the modernistic art cult.

As Ruskin truly observed, "The art of a people is the only quite true gauge of the life and mentality of that people." It would appear that, from a study of their art, the Mayas were the most cruel and sadistic race that has ever existed.

That this conclusion is a correct one is confirmed by a work published by Jarrolds, London, written by J. Leslie Mitchell, an archeologist, who has made an exhaustive research in excavations and records made by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century.

These researches are valuable in that they clearly define the basic religion of the Mayas which was, that the principle of evil was the supreme, all powerful force in the universe, exactly the creed or philosophy of the Marquis de Sade, as developed in his famous work "Justine, or The Misfortunes of Virtue." It may also be noted that, given and accepted the creed or religion based on the thesis of the supremacy of the power of evil, there is evolved a direct stimulus to the mutilation, ugliness, malformation and

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the infliction of torture on the human figure; in short, the negation of the normal processes of the cosmos.

Mr. Mitchell's researches present a highly interesting and distinctive survey of the influence and results of the acceptance of the philosophy of the superior power of evil on a race of intelligent human beings.

Two hundred years after the Spaniards discovered the Mayas with their philosophy of negation, the Marquis de Sade reasserted the same philosophy in literature; one hundred and fifty years later the same credo of evil is reasserted in painting, sculpture and literature by modernistic art.

The Mayas began their cult of ugliness and deformation of the human figure with the infant; to quote Mitchell:

“In this one a child, three days of age, is about to be initiated to the first canons of his culture—the creation of that type of beauty beloved of his civilization. His mother is laying him face downwards in a lattice-work basket, and he winks faintly like a kitten. So lying, a board is tied to his forehead, another to the back of his head, and the two lashed tightly together. The child begins to scream. It hurts. The

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mother soothes it, turning it, and plods on with the work of the day. That screaming will be almost unceasing for many months, while the head of the child changes contour and shape, growing upwards in the prized sugar-loaf shape. The air in the hut is a thick fug, the woman and the child smell stalely."

The consummation of the sadistic process starting with the infant is set forth in the description of the Mayan adult, as he appeared to the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, as a soldier:

"We may imagine the shock of surprise endured by the Spaniards. They had encountered savages in plenty in Darien, but none like these—men of diminutive stature, with squinting eyes and deformed heads, clad in garments skillfully woven, sandaled, strangely armed and armored. Probably their captors stared at them and fingered them in equal wonder, then marched them into a nearby city. It is still very uncertain what that city was. Perhaps it was Tuluum, where the Exbox ruled, and the Spaniards looked upon the city in its later heyday, a city with a thousand years of

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history walled with its temple-fires in the air, its strange and aberrant ceremonial and religious life.

“The Spaniards were flung into a pit and left for a short time. Then a party of the Maya appeared and dragged out Valdivia and some others. They were hurried to a temple and sacrificed, very horribly, and their bodies then quartered, cooked, and eaten by their captors.”

Our Maya adult thus qualified creditably as a warrior with his complete equipment of bestial ugliness and cruelty, ready for his duties as a factor in the Mayan civilization.

But our Maya citizen may be a priest instead of a warrior. Mr. Mitchell with an imagination remarkable for an archeologist describes the priesthood and their duties.

There were two castes of priests, the Chilans and the Nacons: the Chilans, the upper caste, and the Nacons, the lower caste:

“Below the Chilans were the Nacons whose office, whose sole office was to officiate as sacrificers. They sacrificed animals and men, cutting open the breast and tearing out the heart. They were as horrific a priesthood as the world ever knew and in the bright air and dazzling sunshine of the

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Central Americas, in the great building complexes, painted and amazing, it is little wonder that sight of them chilled the hearts of the Spaniards with disgust and hate. They wore their hair long, we are told, and matted with the blood of their victims. At the skinning sacrifices it was a Nacon who donned the skin of the flayed woman and danced the ceremonial dance. They went clad in long cotton robes, blood-stained sacrificially, and their mental life is a thing as remote from modern concept as the mental life of a dinosaur."

I would not quite agree with Mr. Mitchell's conclusion as to the mentality of the Mayan priests being so remote from modern concepts. A survey of the painting and sculpture presented in the exhibitions of modern art in New York and Paris would indicate a remarkable similarity of the concepts of the devotees of modernistic art with those of the Mayan priests.

Perhaps our adult Mayan became an artist. If a painter, he would thus be set to the task of delineating scenes like the following, graphically described by Mr. Mitchell:

"The temple sacrifices being fattened on maize are newly fed. They move eagerly, with the custom grown upon them, to the

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food flung in. They do not know how many days it will be before they are taken out, stripped of their clothing, and painted blue by the hands of the chacs; before in the sight of the waiting throng of helots they are urged up the steps of the Sun Temple to the altar where the Nacon stands with the sacrificial knife; the Chilans beside him to read the portents, the curved block of limestone waiting; before they are stretched out and held on the block, and the knife comes down and the rest of it they will never know, though they know it often enough now in dreams, or unsleeping through the nights—the heart torn out of the chest and flung in a dish to beat, (?) smeared on the idol's face, as a man smears sweat from a sweating face, then the body rolled down the steps of the pyramid to a surge and rush of the waiting helots, each to hack off a slice of the flesh with a flint, and take home to cook and eat. . . .”

It is logical from the above actions that the belief in the superior principle of evil was direct stimulus to the deification of ugliness and the infliction of mutilation and torture, and the domination of a monstrous devil fetish over life and art.

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Mr. Mitchell visualizes another scene which might employ some Maya artist:

“In the light the Chilan from the tower shows up as 5 feet 6 inches in height, with a nightmare face, foreheadless and hindless. From the brow ridges, where the hair has been burned, the head slants back in a level line to the crown. As a result, the nose, curved and slightly hooked, juts out like the beak of a bird. In this mask-like face the eyes show very dark and unemotional. The septum of the nose is pierced with a thin, jadeite plug. In his ears, greatly distended and low-hanging almost to his shoulders, are affixed plugs of painted wood. His body is covered with a complicated tatu in green ink, adding to his bird-like appearance, transforming him in the light of the lamps to the likeness of a faintly-glowing macaw.

“The feasters are mostly occupied in discussing the suicide of a Chilan—the third to die by his own hand that month. The chorus of praise over his act is conventional, but sincere. To all of them the gods of life are evil, and to break their power and escape unto death, not under the hand of either Ah Puch, god of violent extinction, or Hin

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Ahau, deity of slow decay, is a cunning and meritorious act."

But perhaps our artist was a sculptor and executed a bas-relief found at Menchiyaxachilan, representing a penitent or rebel kneeling before a priest or king. The priest holds over the head of the kneeling figure a staff or scepter, the penitent is drawing a cord set with thorns through a slit in his own tongue. Both of the figures in the bas-relief are clumsy, malformed, ugly, brutish, at once suggesting the sadistic creations of modernistic artists.

It would seem that Mayan art was mostly employed in representing scenes of death and torture. This is indicated by the following quotation:

"An altar at Tikal is carved with a design of human heads in bowls—heads of miniature Ganeshas, as the sacrifices assumed the divinity of the god. And at Piedras Negras there is a stela which bears a representation of the actual rite of human sacrifice—the victim stretched across a sacrificial block, his chest expanded, and blood fountaining in the gash from which the heart has been plucked. Again, the commonest of glyphs—those of the full figures numerals, for ex-

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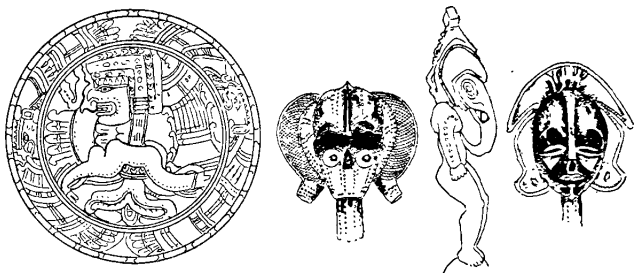
ample—show various bodies in tormented situations and positions. Agony was the tribute that humankind paid to divinity.”

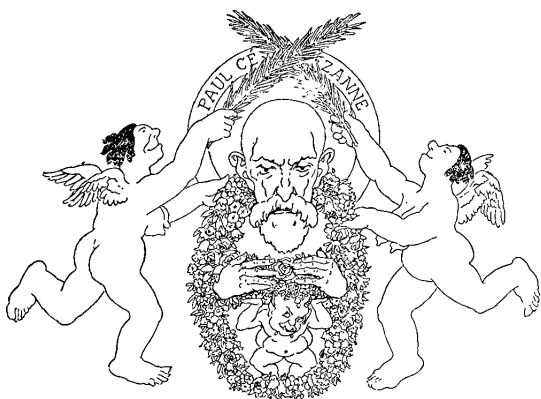
There is much reason to justify the theories of reincarnation and atavism; if true, one can perceive in the reincarnation of the Marquis de Sade an ancient Maya priest. Pursuing this line of thought further, the dreadful possibility arises that the collectors of modernistic art may be the subjects of the atavism or reincarnation of Mayan culture. It is a horrible thought that those well behaved ladies and gentlemen who collect the paintings of Cézanne and Matisse, may have stemmed from such sanguinary butchers as the ugly Mayans. Yet their tastes appear exactly similar in the realm of art.

But these worthy people have not yet reached the acute stage of the malady. The wildest imagination could not picture the worthy devotees of modernistic art, skinning young ladies alive and wearing their skins to jazz dances. Still, there is no escaping the conclusion that the stimulus to all deification of ugliness, obscenity and malformation, so evident in the work of modernistic artists, springs from the same original source as that of the Mayas of a conscious or unconscious strain of an instinct hostile to the normal cosmic process—in short, sadism.

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The devotees of modernistic art should hail the cult of the Mayas as the true American art. They have in the Maya art discovered their true tradition, which heretofore they lacked.





CHAPTER IV

1. *The French Influences*

IN modern times France has been the custodian of the arts, the teacher of esthetics to the nations, as the Greeks were twenty-five centuries ago, and the Italians in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In recent times the only real school of painting was to be found in Paris. It was founded by Francis the First in the fifteenth century, who imported Italian artists, among them Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto and Benvenuto Cellini. This school, superseding the early Gothic art of France and the exquisite art of Clouet, was based on the thoroughness of the Italian and Greek tradition and has since been maintained by the Institute of France. Since the seventeenth century a student of figure paint-

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ing or sculpture, if he wished to equip himself thoroughly in the technique of drawing and composition, had to go to Paris. The art of the world, since that time, has been largely influenced by the French school; the only original note found outside of France was the work of the pre-Raphaelite group of painters in London. The art of America is a reflection of the French school both in landscape and figure work.

In modern times, then, the French consciousness has been the most responsive to the esthetic instinct and consequently, being the most sensitive, did reflect truthfully the environment imposed by changing systems; and it is in the French mind that we find the earliest expression of the modern subconscious negation of the esthetic ideal. The graceful art of Van Loo, Boucher and Lancret was replaced by the powerful creations of David, Gros, Prud'hon, Géricault, Delacroix and Ingres. The advent of Napoleon did not greatly disturb the current of art set in motion by the Revolution. He utilized some of the artists, notably David and Prud'hon, for his aggrandizement, but fortunately for art, his influence was classic. The destruction of feudalism then cleared the way for the advent of the capitalistic system. After passing through a transition stage of the temporary restoration, France received a first installment of capitalism

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through the régime established by Louis Napoleon.

But while the new order of the trading class had put in abeyance the ideals of the Revolution, the artistic ideals remained intact. David was the incarnation of the classic ideal. He produced works of extraordinary power as, for example, the "Coronation of Josephine," his portraits of Napoleon and the Pope, and the dead Marat in his bath, a work prophetic of the tragic and passionate character of the romantic movement that came later. The chief influence of David was felt through his school which, promulgating the artistic ideals of the Revolution, split into two factions, one following Delacroix and Géricault as leaders of the Romantic movement of 1830 in painting, and the other, under the leadership of Ingres and Prud'hon, maintaining the classic traditions of David. Reënforced and vivified by the conscientious study of nature, these two influences merged together in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In 1860 the first evidences of a bourgeois or trading class ideal in art was manifested, developing contemporaneously with the rise of the Second Empire.

A suggestion as to certain principles to be sought for in a work of art may be of assistance in defining the status of the bourgeois ideal of

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ugliness in esthetics. Every true work of art must possess the following attributes: First, design or composition, the element of creation, that is the harmonious arrangement of masses making graceful lines and forms, the proper disposition of spaces; second, the plastic element or sense of form and proportion; third, refinement and beauty of color; fourth, perspective or values, that is, the relation of objects in the foreground to those in the middle distance and extreme distance. In good painting these requirements are always present. They may be termed the affirmative of technique in painting and relate to the purely technical side of art, entirely apart from the theme or subject. Set over these four affirmatives of painting are the four negations, as follows: first, negation of design, the inharmonious disposition of masses and spaces, absence of the creative element resulting in unbeautiful form and discordant lines; second, the negation of form and proportion, the most deadly of all negations; third, the negation of color, expressed in black, leaden tones, faded washes, or in violent or crude primary colors; fourth, the negation of perspective or values, which equals the negation of space.

It may be urged that the ancient art of the Greeks and Italians was lacking in some of these affirmative qualities. The earlier art of

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these races, as far as it developed at any given time, presented all the affirmative qualities in embryo. The archaic forms are never ugly, the arrangement of masses is never disproportionate; there is always present in the primitive work of a great school the germ and promise of the future ideal of beauty, a quality not to be found in the works of a decadent period, or in the production of the present modernistic cult, which has developed a distinctive type of ugliness, obscene and vulgar, never seen in European art, as witness the work achieved by Cézanne, Gauguin, Picasso and Matisse.

Now, in order to understand the nature of the ugliness, it is necessary to differentiate it from what has been taken for ugliness in past times. As a matter of fact, real or absolute ugliness never before existed in European art. The strongest imaginations have gone to the limit of their resources, both in literature and in painting and sculpture, to picture the horrors of suffering and death. Shakespeare, Hogarth, Dürer, Carpaccio and Dante exerted their creative powers in efforts to show the hideous aspect of sin, by always connecting sin with ugliness. The medieval artists who wrought in Gothic cathedrals made very wicked and vicious-looking monsters and devils, which were only grotesque, but not ugly. Shakespeare had a try at it. He

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invented Falstaff, Bardolph, Ancient Pistol and Caliban, and the witches in Macbeth. Falstaff and his company were grotesque; they were not ugly and, above all, they were not commonplace. Dante invented all kinds of horror for his Inferno, racking his imagination for forms of mutilation and monstrous perversions of the human figure; but from Cerberus to the Harpies he failed to create the truly ugly. His monsters were grotesque, like the gargoyles of Nôtre-Dame. The truly ugly was yet to be produced. The hell of Dante was a dreadful and hopeless sphere, but there was a circle, deeper and more hopeless, to which he did not penetrate—the hell of the commonplace supplied by modern democracy.

The grotesque is distinct and apart from the ugly. In Dürer's celebrated etching of the Knight, Death and Sin, the figure of the Evil One might be called ugly by the ordinary observer. It is not ugly, however, but one of the best examples of the grotesque in the domain of art. You may get a clear idea of the distinction between the ugly and the grotesque by taking a photograph of a painting by Cézanne or Gauguin and place it alongside of the Dürer print. One can imagine the figure by Dürer to be the type of an evil power, a creature from the weird and uncanny kingdom of the gnomes, where

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there is gnomic energy and action and endless variety of gnome life. A view of the Cézanne and Gauguin creations leaves the impression that they emanate from a dead world where no living thing can exist. They typify a monotonous, stagnant world, fit for nothing but annihilation, the hell of the commonplace and the obscene. As a type of sin, a modernist painting is more dreadful than Dürer's figure, which is a product of imagination.

Now the realization of absolute ugliness is only made possible, with the exception of the Maya civilization, by totally eliminating the element of imagination and no former environment has been base enough to accomplish this result until the industrialist system, plus democracy, submerged the civilized world. The total destruction of the imagination is a necessary prelude to absolute ugliness.

The French art of the eighteenth century is brilliant in execution, with a great charm of design and tone. There is no approach in any of the eighteenth century Italian or French art to the ugly forms developed in the arts of design in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Some of the painters of the romantic movement in France were accused of deifying the ugly, but the art of the romantic movement was Gothic in its character. The imagination of Victor Hugo was

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Gothic, as witness the way in which he projected himself into the Gothic thought and environment in his study of Nôtre-Dame of Paris. With Delacroix and Géricault the instinct was still Gothic.

The Romantic cult made the chief end and aim of their art the expression of passion, but with all the license involved in the expression of this passion their work never degenerated into ugly forms. In the most intense and tragic of their pictures the disposition of masses and lines was well balanced, harmonious and virile with plastic power, as for example the "Crusaders" and "Barque of Dante" by Delacroix.

A distinction should be made between carelessness of form found in the works of the artists of the romantic movement and the sloppy and ignorant drawing of later painters influenced by bourgeois environment and ideals.

Edouard Manet was the first French artist whose work was entirely free from the influence of either the classic or romantic schools. His painting was the inception of a new cult in art which has for its ultimate the attainment of the ideal ugliness. We find for the first time in the painting of Manet the forms of negation elsewhere referred to. Like most pioneers and founders of cults, Manet did not wholly attain the ideal ugliness. Some of his pictures are good

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in tone and color. His successors, however, have eliminated these defects from his system and produced work wherein there is neither form, tone nor color. Although Manet was a Frenchman, who, it might be supposed, inherited the racial instinct for form and design, and who was not subjected to the bourgeois environment of later times, yet he incorporated in his pictures the ugly masses and discordant lines and angles which later became the fixed expression of democratic class ideals in art, and he was prophetic of the deluge of ugliness which submerges the art of painting today.

The conditions existing in Paris during the Second Empire furnished the necessary environment for the development of Manet's cult in painting. Capitalism was now established throughout Europe. The rise of the trading class was accompanied by the invention of new and various forms of dissipation for the diversion of that class. A great business boom was inaugurated in Paris. Capitalism was rampant and Paris became, forthwith, the playground for the trading class from all parts of the world. For centuries before the Second Empire, Paris had been the Mecca of students, attracted by the fame of its schools. Dante studied there. This influx of students and men of culture from other countries did not alter the essentially Latin and

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esthetic character of the city. But with the advent of the Republic modern industrialism has wrought an enormous change. The traditional bohemianism and student life has disappeared. The students' balls and cafés have been converted into resorts for tourists, where is furnished entertainment for the rapidly increasing hordes of the bourgeoisie.

The German invasion and the Commune, the substitution of the Republic for the Empire, did not disturb the onward march of these capitalist enterprises, which, increasing up to the present time, are rapidly Americanizing Paris. The Champs Élysées was once the most beautiful street in the world. With the superb Arc-de-Triomphe crowning the avenue, with the great masterpiece of sculpture by Rude facing the perspective to the Place de la Concorde, was created the harmony of a perfect design. That harmony is now destroyed. The once beautiful avenue is lined now with hideous electric signs, garish billboards, effectually mutilating the once beautiful architecture. The Champs Élysées is now a reproduction of Broadway, New York.

When I pass through the avenue and witness the destruction wrought by commerce and democracy, I am seized with a profound depression and melancholy, for I knew Paris when it was beautiful before the invasion of the "étranger." The

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favorite rendezvous of strangers in the seventies and eighties were the haunts of Manet. The Folies-Bergères furnished the themes for many of his pictures and he was thoroughly imbued with the coarse vulgarity and life of these resorts; his consciousness reflected and expressed in painting the commonplace sensuality and low vulgarity of bourgeois attributes.

After the Franco-Prussian war the influence of Manet spread rapidly, manifesting itself in different kinds of impressionism, marked by the elimination of drawing and design, the lack of construction and proportion. The general sloppiness of the cult attracted the incapable, the charlatans and those who, without the will or ability to absorb discipline, wished to impose themselves on the public as artists. This great horde separated into groups, some tagging themselves as symbolists, others as mystics and impressionists. Along in the eighties these formed a society of independents, and since then have held a regular annual salon where, for the expenditure of five francs, any one can have a canvas hung.

The cult of modernistic art was fairly launched. The romantic and classic movement developed by the Revolution merged together in the Beaux-Arts, after the passing of Delacroix and Ingres. The difference between the two

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schools became less marked; the influence of the Romantics leavened the rigid formulas inaugurated by David and his followers. On the other hand, the defects in drawing of the Romanticists were corrected. The two influences working toward a harmonious unity for a period resulted in the development of artists such as Regnault, Gustave Moreau, Millais, Baudry, Henner, Bastien-Lepage and historical painters, such as Cabanel, Gérôme, Boulanger, Cormon, Jean Paul Laurens, Merson and Besnard; and sculptors such as Denys Puech, Dalou, Frémiet and Mercié.

The climax of every revolution is always preceded by a radical movement which may be in the nature of a compromise; for example, the Girondins of the French Revolution did not visualize that they were unloosing the Furies of the Terror, and when faced with the Terror they were horrified at the result of their work.

An historic analogy might be drawn from the advent of the Impressionist movement in art. The Girondists paved the way for the Terror. It is quite plain that the rise of the Impressionists in the seventies and eighties performed the same function for the Modernist Terror in the nineties and later. The propagandists of the modernists are now making the same ferocious attacks on the Academy as the Impressionists did in the

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seventies, using precisely the same vituperation and slander so much in evidence by the exploiters of Manet, then, as now, ignoring the splendid work of the great painters, sculptors and architects of the nineteenth century. The hack writers on art rang the changes of abuse on Cabanel, Gérôme, Bouguereau and the Academy. The above artists are all sound draughtsmen. There is nothing that so exasperates the *fauves* as good drawing. A fair examination of the work of Manet and his followers will furnish evidence of a strain that has fully flowered in the present creations of the modernists. Manet's "dejeuner sur l'herbe" is a group of extremely commonplace bourgeoisie who are doing, in a clumsy vulgar way, a sylvan idyll in imitation of the painting by Giorgione in the Louvre.

A comparison of Manet's group with the sylvan amours of Watteau and Fragonard will convey an idea of decay of elegance and good taste ushered in by the new democracy. The "Olympia" by Manet is another expression of the supreme commonplace. The picture represents a well-battered prostitute, the common property of the common people of the boulevards, a truly democratic whore. What Manet did for the petits bourgeois, Toulouse-Lautrec did for the sordid dissipations of Paris. He was a man of brilliant talent, but a degenerate, a virtuoso with

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a demoniac magic in interpreting the souls of the wastrels and absinthe wrecks of Montmartre and the Batignolles.

Zola wrought in literature what Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec expressed in painting. The cult of the ugly and obscene was now fairly launched. The Gospel of Ugliness and the Banal—the contribution of the industrial revolution to the esthetic culture of the world!

The art dealers in Paris having gathered large stocks of the work of the Impressionist painters, now organized a campaign of defamation and abuse of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the Academicians. The hack writers of the Paris press, in the interest of the art dealers, held up to scorn the artists of the Institute and the Académie des Beaux-Arts.

This calumniation of academicians has been continued to the present day by the neurotic writers and pseudo-art critics who sponsor degenerate art. The logical successors of Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec and the Impressionists are Cézanne, Gauguin, Picasso, Matisse, Derain and their rabble of imitators.

The sponsors of the modernistic art cult should gracefully give credit to the journalists and their employers, the art dealers, who eulogized the Impressionists and calumniated the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the Academicians, thus

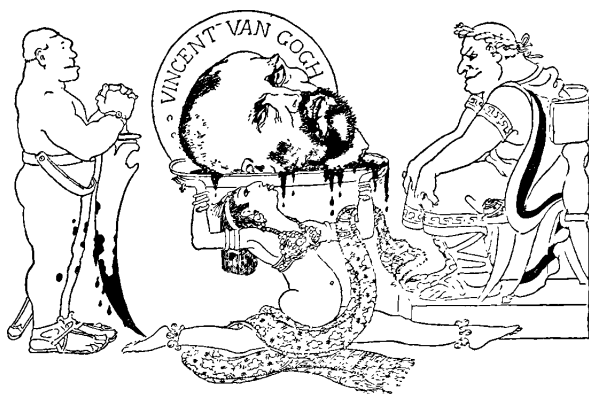
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paving the way and establishing the formula for the advent later on of the *fauves* and the modernist art.

Amid all the clamor for change, the Institute and the Académie des Beaux-Arts kept on the even tenor of their way. True to their mission as conservators of the classic tradition, they stood firm against the forces of destructive anarchy in the arts.

"Let in the jungle!" cried the beasts in Kipling's tale in their revolt against man. "Let in the jungle!" Those so-called artists whom the French, with their characteristic aptness for phrases, call "*les fauves*," have uttered similar slogans in their mad revolt against beauty and true art.

The Institute and Academy, holding fast to the beautiful and the true, deserve the gratitude and support of every lover of order and beauty throughout the world.



2. *Misrepresentation of French Art*

One of the salient features of the propaganda of the modernist art fanatics is the disparagement of the leading French Masters of the nineteenth century by the hack writers on art. A good example of this kind of misrepresentation was furnished in an issue of the London *Daily Mail* of February 2nd, 1934.

In an article written by the *Daily Mail* "Art Expert" on the fiftieth anniversary of the Salon des Independants, this "Art Expert" in tracing the beginnings of the Salon des Independants, unburdens himself thus:

"It will be sufficient to state that, about 1880, French art—as seen in the old academical salon—had fallen into a state of mediocrity, and extreme poverty of talent.

"Artists of indifferent talent, such as Bou-

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guereau, Cabanel, Bonnat, Gérôme, Carolus-Duran, Detaille, Cormon, Rochegrosse and their pupils, alone occupied the walls of the salon and closed it to any novelty."

An absolutely false statement!

The "Art Expert" then goes on to name the bright lights of French art who founded the *Salôn des Independants*:

"At first, the salon was only composed of a few artists, but it grew—much too fast in fact—having attracted all the young art students. Those who exhibited there, and particularly at the beginning, have become the most sought-after painters of our epoch (the majority, moreover, having disappeared before fame reached them).

"The principal ones were: Cézanne, Odilon, Redon, Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Cross, Vallotoun, Laprade, Guillaumin and Seurat (among the dead) and Roussel, Vuillard, Bonnard, Denis, Segonzac and Matisse who are still with us."

Among those above listed only Toulouse-Lautrec possessed any real talent. The others were men of very mediocre ability who could never hope to arrive along the line of the best French tradition.

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The "Art Expert," with that stupid dishonesty characteristic of the modernistic art propagandist, ignores the artists of real genius who made the period of the seventies and eighties one of the most brilliant in the history of French art.

Besides the artists named by our "Art Expert" as men of "indifferent talent," there were during the period of the eighties Meissonier, Olivier Merson, Bastien-Lepage, Raphael Colin, Jean-Paul Laurens, Henner, Hébert, Gustave Moreau, Harpignies, Ribot, Delaunay, Paul Baudry, and sculptors like Dalou, Denys Puech, Frémiet, Dampé, Paul Dubois, Mercié, the animaliers Cain and Gardet, and others of high creative talent.

Against this array of fine talent our "Art Expert" mobilizes a canaille of talent, some of them semi-insane, and all more or less under the shadow of the Marquis de Sade.

Another example of the persistent misrepresentation and outright falsehood published regarding French art is a book recently published in New York by E. P. Dutton & Co., written by Paul Cohen-Portheim (translated by Alan Harris), entitled "The Spirit of France."

This book aptly describes the very Latin character of the French race and quite justly eulogizes the French as the faithful guardians and

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conservators of the Latin tradition. True to his Latin heritage, the Frenchman thinks logically and clearly; everything vague, nebulous, half-baked, is unsympathetic to him; he stands for measure and order, he visualizes with lucidity, sees clear outlines; in short, he preserves the Greek and Latin tradition of the sense of form.

All very fine and very true; but the author's subsequent concept of the French mind is so far below the above summary, suspicions inevitably arise that the author must have derived his views of the French mind from other sources than his own observation.

Our author passes through the Middle Ages in his search for the French spirit. Arriving at the period of Louis XIV, he notes the painters of the superficial society of the time, crediting the artists with "sound craftsmanship," without which art cannot flourish and only genius can afford to despise. This is certainly a gem and can be seen as an introduction to the author's eulogy of the bungling technic of Cézanne and the half-baked charlatans of modernistic art.

Did Michael Angelo, Benvenuto Cellini and Raphael of the Italian Renaissance "despise good craftsmanship"? Did Ingres, Prud'hon, Paul Baudry, Barye, Rude and Carpeaux also despise "good craftsmanship"? No real genius ever despised good craftsmanship. The greater

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the genius the more he stressed good craftsmanship. This sort of stupid gabble is the stock in trade of the bolsheviks of modernistic art.

Another gem of Mr. Cohen-Portheim is that Poussin is the ancestor of Corot and Cézanne. Now, Poussin's work is noted for his clearness of vision, good proportions, sound drawing, good taste, well balanced composition, all of which is lacking in the clumsy, incoherent, vulgar obscenity of Cézanne's painting.

As for Corot, he was a sensitive poet, who interpreted the poesy of landscape with a truly classic interpretation. The landscapes of Cézanne appear to be in a dead, blasted world, where, devastated by plague and earthquake, no living thing could exist—the world seen through the disordered temperament of a lunatic.

Leaving the seventeenth and eighteenth century painters with credit for sound craftsmanship depised by genius, Mr. Cohen-Portheim lands in the Revolutionary-Napoleonic epoch. He finds nothing worth while in art in that epoch. He ignores the masterpieces of David and Prud'hon, the splendid portraiture of the great historical paintings of David, "The Coronation of Josephine" and "The Death of Marat," and the beautiful classic allegories of Prud'hon.

From the First Empire, Mr. Cohen-Portheim moves on to the period of the Romantic move-

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ment. After discussing briefly Delacroix and Romanticism he discovers the forerunners of the modernist art cult in Courbet and the Impressionists, finally arriving at Cézanne.

Passing through the period of Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Monet and the Impressionist group, our author, like the "Art Expert" of the *Daily Mail*, does not mention the artists of genius—such painters as Paul Baudry, Bastien-Lepage, Gérôme, Cormon, Henri Regnault, Henner, Olivier Merson, Boulanger, Jean-Paul Laurens, Bonnat, Harpignies, and sculptors such as Rude, Carpeaux, Frémiet, Denys Puech, Falguière, Mercié, Paul Dubois, and many others of this brilliant galaxy, which made the period of the seventies and eighties one of the greatest in the history of art.

The excursion of Mr. Cohen-Portheim through the perspective of French art resembles the journey of Mephistopheles and Faust through the classic Walpurgis night. Like Mephistopheles, Mr. Cohen-Portheim was disgusted with the Greek forms and classic tradition, so strong a factor in French art. As Mephistopheles advanced through the domain of Greek culture, tortured by visions of antique beauty, he finally arrived at the place of the Phorkyads, the Three Grey Sisters; they represented the climax of the Greek concept of the ugly, the horrible and the

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repulsive. Mephistopheles was ravished with delight. He had found the ideal ugliness. Mr. Cohen-Portheim was moved by a similar ecstasy when he discovered Cézanne, and exploded into hyperbole and panegyric, in praise of the work of this semi-idiot. Like Mephistopheles, Mr. Cohen-Portheim had arrived at the chief protagonist of the ideal ugliness. In the ecstasy of his discovery of Cézanne, the author of the "Spirit of France" visualizes that old shop-worn, frayed-out ideal of European unity, from the standpoint of art.

"In the final realization of European unity," he says, "there is to be no national art, no French art, nor English, nor Italian nor German art, only European art."

Mr. Cohen-Portheim begins his panegyric of Cézanne with the following:

"The new painting starts with Cézanne and is based entirely on him. It is the painting of reconstruction, of the new vision. The world begins again from the beginning and Cézanne is a primitive, but a primitive who has absolved the whole of decaying civilization, digested it and overcome it. The reconstruction of Europe began in the painting of Cézanne long before its destruction had become a material fact. It is genuinely

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the harbinger of a new age and a new outlook. Cézanne looked at the world as if no painter before him had ever looked at it."

Certainly, no normal mind ever visualized the world as Cézanne saw it. Perhaps there was a similar concept of the world by the Marquis de Sade and the artists of the gruesome civilization of the Mayas. Our author continues:

"Cézanne's work has the quality of inevitableness and its triumph was equally inevitable. Since his day it is no longer possible to see the world otherwise than as he saw it, because he was the first person who saw our present world. All modern painting is based on him, and through him there is at last a European art again."

To be condemned to live in a world conjured up in the disordered mind of the semi-lunatic, Cézanne, is certainly a dreadful outlook for the future.

What manner of world is this of Cézanne's which we are doomed to behold? From his paintings it would seem to be the slag of an outcast planet. Dust and ashes, an appropriate setting for the dropsical, malformed, unclean human beings Cézanne placed in his world; in short, a

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gangrened, unwholesome world, where the Marquis de Sade would be king.

Mr. Cohen-Portheim further goes on to proclaim the slavery of the world of art to Cézanne:

“The cubists are his successors; the problem with which they are concerned is that of structure, which was raised once more by him. Bracque and Picasso derive from Cézanne; so do Derain and Neoclassicism, which is only the continuation of another side of his work. All the Scandinavians, Germans and Australians who are trying to express their feelings about the world in terms of paint, whether in Paris or in their homes, are children of Cézanne, brothers and sisters.”

The hysterical ravings of Mr. Cohen-Portheim indicate the extent of his subjection to the universal sadistic hypnosis which at the present time is enveloping the world of art. He adds:

“There is no longer any such thing as a national school of modern painting; there is only a European school, or rather, a school of the white race. In this sphere united Europe is an accomplished fact, the new spirit has reached the stage of fulfillment,

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and if one were asked to define it, impalpable though it is, one could not do better than point to Cézanne. There is the synthesis of rationalism and emotion, the clearness that is born of profundity, the absence of ornament which is concealed wealth, the honesty which, so far from being prosaic, is the distilled essence of poetry; there is the new truth."

The above excerpts are cited as part of the current campaign of misrepresentation of French art and artists by the propagandists of modernist art. They are of no importance as literature, but they illustrate the anarchistic hatred of order and beauty that animates pseudo-art critics.

Recently there was published a ponderous volume written by one Thomas Craven, entitled "Modern Art."

This book differs from the two examples quoted above in that it is charged with a malicious venom directed at the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the personality of the Academicians. So virulent is the abuse, that it arouses the suspicion that Mr. Craven attempted to paint, and failing, was turned down by the Academy; then, like other failures, he vented his chagrin by turning art critic and vilifying the Academicians.

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Mr. Craven states on page 242 of "Modern Art" that his father looked upon "painting as a low pursuit." Mr. Craven inherited this concept of the art of painting, which accounts for his admiration of Cézanne and Matisse.

He surveys the short-lived venture of the Impressionists with some compliments for Manet and the fat, unwashed, bulbous wenches of Rénoir, and finally arrives at Cézanne. Like Mr. Cohen-Portheim in the "Spirit of France" Mr. Craven hails Cézanne as the pioneer, the primitive of modernistic art, who will rescue the world of art from the slavery of the Academy. Says Mr. Craven: "It is not presumptuous to say, that on the present generation of painters in Europe and America the influence of Cézanne predominates." Does it? In the French salon of 1934, where over five thousand works were exhibited, there was no evidence of the influence of Cézanne. In the Royal Academy of London of the same year there was no sign of the influence of Cézanne; it was also strictly absent in the National Academy in New York.

Does Mr. Craven mean to imply that the members of the above societies are not artists and are to be ignored? Are only the mental derelicts who compose the modernist art movement to be rated as artists?

Mr. Craven further says:

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“Of Cézanne’s aims there can be no doubt: they were identical with the aims of the greatest masters. Awkward and incomplete in paint, he was capable, at moments, of extraordinary verbal lucidity.”

In short, his painting was poor, but he had the gift of gab!

There has been much said about the aims and frustrated intentions of Cézanne. Such reasoning would excuse the inmates of every poor house, lunatic asylum or prison. Why is it that the frustration theory appeals so pathetically to art critics? It is a comfort to failures. . . .

Mr. Craven does not condemn us as did Mr. Cohen-Portheim to the dreadful fate of seeing the world as Cézanne viewed it, but, still imitating Mr. Cohen-Portheim, he draws a picture of the degradation of the Academicians and corresponding brilliancy of modernistic degenerates.

Of the Academy painters of the eighties and nineties, Mr. Craven writes:

“The leaders of this dreadful group are now forgotten, but in their day they were famous: Gérôme, Bouguereau, Bonnat, Benjamin-Constant, Carolus-Duran, Dagnan-Bouveret, Henner and the elder Lau-

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rens and Henri Martin and Besnard who robbed the Impressionists of a few tricks and sold them to the State. What a crew!

Mr. Craven's false evaluation of the work of the artists named exposes his profound ignorance of the basic principles of plastic art, one of which is sound drawing. Being devoid of the sense of form, Mr. Craven prefers the flabby, unclean malformations of Cézanne to the beautiful plastic creations of Gérôme or the great historic paintings of Jean-Paul Laurens. He states that the artists he refers to were called to the service of the State in their old age. As a matter of fact, at the period of which Mr. Craven writes, 1900, the artists he names had already executed their most important commissions for the Government. In the early eighties Jean Paul-Laurens had placed his great mural in the Pantheon, Carolus-Duran had painted the plafond for one of the Grands Salons of the Louvre; Besnard had also executed important murals in public buildings; Bonnat, likewise, had placed his masterpiece, "The Decapitation of Saint-Denis," in the Pantheon. All these artists were young or middle-aged men at the time they executed these works.

Not content with discrediting the work of those men, Mr. Craven proceeds to slander and cal-

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uminate the private character of the artists he names. He continues:

“In their youth they lived in a state of poverty that would break all but the most conceited of men. At forty they got into the papers; at fifty they earned a little money and suffered terribly from rheumatism; at sixty, or later, they won medals and with proper political backing, official jobs, at an age when the springs of their energy, all but dried-up, leaked out, at long intervals, in miserable drops. Married or single, they lived with old actresses, broken-down models, or superannuated grisettes, who had shown their legs in public. We need not waste any sympathy on this type of painter. He does not belong in art, and he and his women, and his promoters are the curse of art.”

As I was living in Paris in the eighties and nineties, it was my good fortune to know personally some of the men in Mr. Craven's list. I can testify that they lived well-ordered family lives, that not one of them, so far as I knew, ever “lived with broken-down models,” or “old actresses.”

Such calumniations, false and vindictive, could

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only emanate from the victim of an inferiority complex, tortured with a consciousness of impotence when viewing the achievements of creative talent.

Mr. Craven's "Modern Art" is a perfect specimen of what is utilized in a widespread campaign of modernist art fanatics to destroy the classic traditions in painting and sculpture, and to discredit the French Académie des Beaux-Arts, which is now the one stronghold and conservator of that tradition.

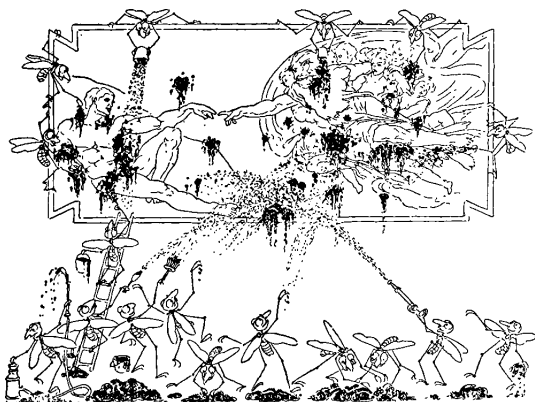
The views of the above writer are the stock in trade of nearly all the writers, teachers and lecturers on art in the United States. Their false statements about French classic art are being broadcast in schools, colleges, museums and the press.

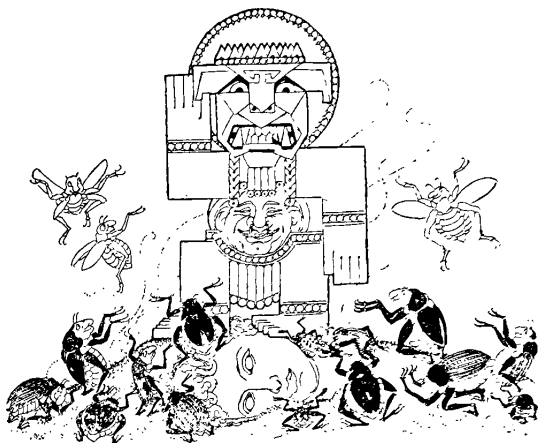
To those with seeing eyes it is the revolt of the inferior minds, of the impotent, the mentally meager, who, through a smattering of education and a devastating inferiority complex, have fiercely resolved that they will destroy the destiny that has so cruelly denied them the power to create, but granted them enough intelligence to be conscious of their impotence. Awakened to a sense of its limitation, the inferior mind evokes an apocalypse wherein all former achievements of superior minds, all traditions of the past vic-

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tories of human genius in the arts, shall be obliterated.

The inferior mind, being powerless to achieve the standards set by genius, casts about for a semblance of achievement. Like Macbeth clutching the air, dagger drawn, the inferior mind visualizes ugliness; quickly to this is added obscenity and sadistic mutilation, and lo, modernistic art is born. The cosmos vanishes, democracy triumphs, and Mephistopheles is Lord of all.





CHAPTER V

The Inferiority Complex in Art

“Will nothing beyond your capacity. There is an evil falsehood in such as will beyond their capacity.

“In particular if they will great things! for they cause mistrust towards great things, these fine false coiners and actors.”

—NIETZSCHE: “Thus Spake Zarathustra.”

WHEN the inferior man arrives at a certain degree of intelligence he desires to create. When he makes the effort and fails, then he becomes conscious of his impotence; then arises the spirit of revolt. Along with the consciousness of impotence, the cosmos with a refinement of cruelty implants within him a devastating ego that clamors for applause and limelight.

Hopeless of achieving success in creative

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effort, he searches for ways to gain prestige. He invents democracy, socialism and modernistic art. He invokes the destruction of all standards which rise above his own limitations and proclaims the end of the old and the advent of the new. Such is the vengeance of the man with the inferiority complex.

At the present time, the Americans in the United States seem to be obsessed with a hysterical mania for the new, for a new deal in everything. This mania has become chronic in America since the war. It received a powerful impetus from President Roosevelt's proclaimed New Deal. For some years the strongest argument in use by high-power salesmen was that the article for sale was up to date; that was sufficient.

In the fields of economics and politics the college professors are shrieking that Capitalism is dead! That Socialism or Communism will provide the coming Utopia. Throughout the country societies are formed for the purpose of shaping various kinds of paradise. The newspapers and the magazines are filled with articles offering salvations to a perishing world, all of which are supposed to be new. As a result, there is universal confusion which prepares a perfect condition for the fakers of modernistic art, to lavish their swindles on a nerve shattered world.

These charlatans fill the air with their howls,

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proclaiming the advent of a new esthetic cult, a New Deal in Art. This cry is evidence of a profound ignorance of the true meaning and philosophy of art. Truly, there is no new art, or old art. Every real work of art is timeless. The esthetic principles involved in the Parthenon frieze, the Venus de Milo or Ingres' "La Source" are changeless and eternal.

The works of Michael Angelo, Raphael and Titian established a standard of esthetics which has been maintained and not changed for centuries and will exist for all time.

When Giotto and Mantegna executed their masterpieces, they reaffirmed the basic principles of Greek art.

Along with the superficial anarchy of modernistic art, there is a stupid craze for originality, where there is no originality. When the Renaissance artists reaffirmed the principles of Greek art, they were not original but different. "For countless ages," said a great artist, "the earth has put forth every year a new growth of plants and animals, not two of which are alike. Nothing is really original but while they are all different, all are subject to the same irrevocable law, unchangeable and eternal."

Now the attempt to escape from the principles that govern all true works of art is sure evidence

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of inferior minds, of corrupt minds, of minds that cannot assimilate the discipline of sound drawing and the necessary equipment to create a first-rate picture or statue. Consequently, the attempt to create without such discipline and equipment issues in ugliness, obscenity and deformation, such as the swollen distortion of Cézanne or the anemic sadism of Modigliani. The craze for the new and original in art is the camouflage of inferior minds to conceal their impotence and divert attention from the main problem.

The advent of the Impressionists, and later of the modernist movement in Paris, was a strange phenomenon. The question arises, how is it that in a Latin race gifted with a genius for beauty, a superior plastic instinct and tradition of splendid achievement in the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture, how is it that in the same environment, a cult could arise that is a complete negation of all the above attributes?

The answer, I think, is quite simple. There exists in the cosmic plan a principle of evil symbolized in the Western nations as the Devil, Lucifer or Mephistopheles. These symbols have been celebrated by some of the greatest poets. Dante, Goethe and Milton invested their symbols with a certain dignity and power. The principle of evil was more fully expressed in

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literature by the Marquis de Sade, in that it invoked the elements of ugliness, obscenity, mutilation and torture; it is also elemental in the Maya culture and in modernistic art. Its first great explosion in Western Europe was the French Revolution, resulting in an orgy of sadistic destruction. The French Revolution was the first great quest for the new, the first great triumph of the inferior mind.

This explosion of the inferior mind destroyed the ancient tradition of government and society. Now that the inferior mind was triumphant, it is only logical that it should assert itself in the culture of France. Hence, the advent of the impressionist and modernist art.

Then two things happened which confirmed the triumph of the inferior mind in its quest for the new and made the triumph permanent: The industrial revolution establishing the machine age and Karl Marx with his bible of socialism.

The cosmic evil is incarnate in the volition of the inferior mind. It is ever active and destructive. It has arisen and destroyed all former cultures. The advent of the modernist cult in the arts was a revolt of the inferior mind against the inhibitions and standards set by superior minds in the arts.

Manet, Cézanne and Picasso were the Danton,

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Marat and Robespierre of the modernist movement in France.

The cosmic principle of evil issuing in a revolt against the classic traditions in the arts was inherited from the French Revolution. It had its recrudescence in the Commune and in the modernist cult in the arts. This, I think, accounts for the apparent paradox of the growth of a poisonous negation in the classic atmosphere of France.

The inevitable result of democracy is to place power in the hands of inferior men and women who have emerged from the mob; it panders to the mob and reflects mob mentality. In politics the superior man mentally and morally will not thus debase himself. This accounts for the low mentality and moral debasement of politicians, always a factor in democratic governments.

Witness, New York and Chicago. The easy acquisition of wealth under democracy in the United States in the last fifty years is an example of great wealth coming into the possession of the inferior man, with its corollary of power, but without the intelligence and honesty to use it wisely. With no control over his greed, his lust and his cruelty, the inferior man converts the fairest country in the world into a vale of discord. He creates a sham prosperity which was the gate of hell to millions of people. Such is

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democracy. When the inferior man, having gained great wealth under the democratic system, turns his attention to the arts, he creates a sham culture, as great a fraud as his sham prosperity.

Having no background of culture, the inferior man falls an easy victim to the high-pressure salesmen and promoters of modernistic art and fake old masters. These salesmen and go-getters, as art dealers, regard all art products only as articles of commerce, like automobiles, or real estate, to be sold. They apply the same technique to the traffic in the arts as are employed in selling worthless stocks or building lots in Florida lagoons, or the bonds of South American republics.

Here we observe the inferior man beaten at his own game. The go-getter unloads upon him spurious old masters, fake antiques, and worst of all, the worthless output of degenerate and sadistic art.

Here, it may be of interest, to examine the mentality of the people who are attracted to neurotic art.

There are three prime stimuli that cause people to gravitate to modernistic art. First, the people composing a majority of the population who are attracted to modernistic art as a fad, as

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the latest, most up-to-date thing. They rush to climb on the band-wagon before it is too late. Such people have no real interest in art and are profoundly ignorant of esthetics. They buy with no other motive than to be with the latest vogue and pretend to a sham culture.

Second, there are the people who gravitate to sadistic art in obedience to an irresistible congenital urge of a sadistic instinct for mutilation. Such people under normal conditions may live and die without ever betraying to the world their hidden neurotic strain, unless they are faced with the proper conditions to call forth from the depths of the sub-conscious the urge for ugliness and mutilation. Such conditions are present when the victims of a congenital sadistic strain are confronted with the paintings and sculptures of modernistic art.

Third, the stimuli born of greed—which accounts for the activities of dealers and “pseudo-dealers,” who masquerade as collectors and traffic in modernistic art. A proper degree of culture in America would place the dealer in modernistic art on the same plane as that of the bootlegger and the dealer in the white slave traffic. Of course, the dealer and pseudo dealer may be activated by the two former stimuli in addition to the third.

There is no escaping the conclusion that peo-

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ple who are attracted to modernistic art are moved by one or possibly all three of the above stimuli.

It is plainly evident that no one with a normal appreciation of form and proportion, with a sensitive concept of a world of three dimensions, can admire the hideous, sadistic malformations of Matisse, Picasso and their imitators. Inevitably the sadistic strain leads to a pursuit of ugliness. All modernistic art is intensely ugly. As sadism is primarily an urge to mutilation, it follows logically that an art tainted with these stigmata must be ugly.

The pursuit of ugliness seems to be the leading motive in the work of the Mexican artists in Radio City and the murals of Dartmouth College. This in itself is an evidence of degeneracy. There is also present an urge for ugliness in many of the paintings shown in the National Academy exhibitions and in the numerous one-man shows. This pursuit of ugliness is invariably a camouflage to conceal the poverty of imagination and impotency of the sense of form. The creation of ugliness is a gesture of the inferior man.

The phenomenon of modernistic art presents a psychological interest which calls for profound reason and study. So far as I know, the subject has been ignored by psychologists. A patho-

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logical strain runs through the whole of the modernistic cult. The deification of ugliness and obscenity, the urge for mutilation, deformation, muddy color and exaggeration, are all symptoms of sadism, indicating a form of *psycopathia-sexualis*.

Another factor in the cult of esthetic negation is the spirit of revolt against all authorized tradition in art, which is inherent in unbalanced psychopathic natures such as compose the devotees of modernistic art. To confirm this view, one has only to attend an exhibition of this art and carefully observe the people who admire the works of Cézanne and Matisse. This last element of the instinct for revolt and its content of sexual perversion is largely responsible for the fascination that sadistic art has for socialists, communists and radical literary people. An ugly malformed statue or painting is a more profound and expressive symbol of revolt than the hammer and sickle, for the hammer and sickle cover only a local condition; whereas, the creation of ugliness means a revolt against the normal processes of the cosmos, a negation of the fundamental intent of the Universal Soul.

Another factor in the development and propaganda of the modernistic art cult, is the snobbishness of wealthy women who follow the artificial vogue in art as they do the milliner's styles. The

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art activities of women of wealth in New York City have been almost entirely devoted to the propaganda of sadistic art. They have been the easy marks for the go-getter salesmen, of dealers who palmed off pictures on them for fancy prices that will in a few years be worthless.

A salient example is that of Miss B. This estimable lady fell a victim to the wiles of high powered salesmanship to the extent of forming a collection of modernistic art rubbish, which in a dozen years from now will not fetch at a public sale the cost of the canvas and frames. Even so, the acquisition of this collection of ugly daubs was hailed by the gabbling pseudo-art critics as an event of epochal importance in the world of art, and they lauded it as significant evidence of an American's advance in the higher esthetic culture.

The frantic pursuit of culture in the United States has developed a distinct type of fanatic, especially in the pursuit of esthetic culture in the plastic arts of sculpture and painting. This cultural fanaticism reaches its most repugnant form in the wild propaganda of the modernistic art fanatics and, as in the case of the centipedes in Death Valley, the female is more deadly than the male.

A feature of the modernistic art cult is the hatching of a brood of females who become so

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inflamed with Cézanne and Matisse worship, that they dedicate themselves to the propaganda of the new deal in art with a ferocious zeal only equaled by installment house salesmen and bond peddlers. These unsexed females, filled with an ecstasy for service and uplift, become the viragoes of the cultural crusade. They enlist in their train an auxiliary of male castrata who serve as art critics, always with a background of picture dealers and directors of museums. Presto, straightaway the air is filled with male and female eruptions glorifying modernistic art. These energetic viragoes then organize museums, exhibitions, lecture courses, and furnish the necessary funds for propaganda.

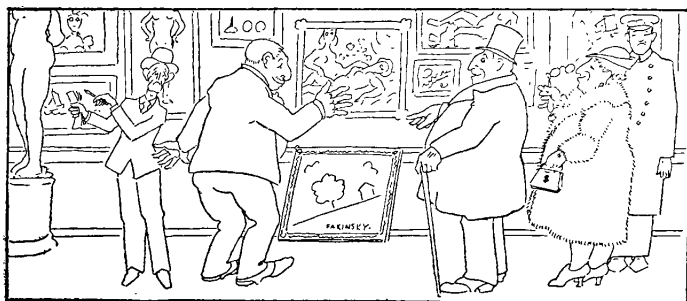
The strident impudence of the modernist art propaganda is the gesture of a devastating inferiority complex.

The only solution possible to the inferior minds is the leveling down of all to their own level. The first step in this direction is to destroy all tradition and the standards of all cultural values created by former civilizations. This they are doing in Russia, and attempting to do in America.

The awakening of the inferiors to a consciousness of their inferiority and impotence has under modern democracy unloosed a horde of bar-

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barians comparable to the followers of Genghis Khan. To overcome this horde and preserve civilization is the stupendous task that faces the present and future generations.





CHAPTER VI

Music and the Dance

“The flexible, persuading body, the dancer whose likeness and summary is the self-joyful soul. The self-joy of such bodies and souls calleth itself ‘virtue.’”

—NIETZSCHE: “Thus Spake Zarathustra.”

“I pray you, Young American Composer, create the music for the dance that shall express the America of Walt Whitman, the America of Abraham Lincoln. And this dance will have nothing in it either of the servile coquetry of the ballet or the sensual convulsion of the South African negro. It will be clean.”

—ISADORA DUNCAN.

Two divine arts, Music and the Dance, the arts of the gods. With the Greeks the dance was an art much more highly regarded than with us. Their philosophers attributed to it a moral influence. They said that “the dance is, of all

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the musical arts, the one that most influences the soul. The arts of poetry, music and dancing are divine in their nature and are the gift of the gods."

Of all the arts, the Greek gods were most concerned with music and the dance, the two arts celebrated in the mythology of all the races.

Wagner has said that the dance was the most divine of the arts, superior to the other arts. Painting, sculpture and poetry are representations of life. The dance is life itself, the living, moving expression of the passion, the beauty, the rhythm of the cosmos.

The dance has been the symbol of triumph and victory for the heroes and conquering races of the world. With all primitive people their conception of the dance is mimetic; that is, its object is to mimic the movements of some real drama, of war, or religious ritual or the orgy of bacchanals. An example is the Pyrrhic dance of the Greeks, representing the movements of warriors in combat. The Pyrrhic dance is the theme of a masterpiece by the French artist Boulanger, in the Opera House in Paris.

In America we have only one dance, the jazz. It, also, is narrative, as was the Greek dance, but what does it mimic? Unlike all other dances there is no rhythmic movement of the body or limbs. Now, the beauty and fascination of the

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dance are the undulations and graceful rhythmic lines of the human figure. Shakespeare says in "Winter's Tale": "When you dance, I wish you a wave of the sea."

The Greek dance, the waltz, the lovely minuet, required a free movement of the whole body. This is impossible in the jazz; in this dance only the feet move and that movement is not free, only a clumsy monotonous shuffling backward and forward; other members of the body are rigid and static.

In the dance of one of the savage tribes of Assam, where men and women dance together, there is a trace of deliberate obscenity; their dance is, in fact, a rude representation of sexual passion.

I would suggest that on night-club programs, invitations to balls and coming out parties, there be engraved a phallic symbol. Perhaps Mr. Matisse or Mr. Epstein could be employed. Right here comes in the explanation of the mimetic implication involved in the jazz dance with its fox trot, et cetera.

The jazz dance is now the universal dance. Again, if it is mimetic, what does it mimic? Certainly the wildest imagination could not utilize the fox trot to celebrate the victories of war, or to express religious ecstasy, or the yield of the harvest or vintage, or the procreative power of

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nature. The fox trot or the Charleston are a direct stimulus to the sexual act. To verify this one has only to witness the dancing in any night club or in a débutante coming-out party, or on one of the great ocean liners with a full passenger list. There may be seen human beings packed together like sardines in a box on the dancing floor, squirming and writhing as if in agony. Therein we have the explanation of the mimetic content of the jazz dance. As the Greek pyrrhic dance was a mimicking of the movements of warriors in combat, so the fox trot mimics the movements of the sexual act.

The following from the *Dial*, is the impression made on the mind of Maxim Gorky in Italy, when jazz music broke in on his meditations on the Soviet Utopia. The contrast between the harmony of nature, the cosmos, and the ghastly discord of democratic music, is well expressed in what Gorky aptly terms the music of the degenerate:

“It is night.

“Yet—it seems somewhat unsuitable—the word night—confronted by this wonderful sky of Southern Italy, this atmosphere impregnated with blue light and with the aromatic warmth of a kindly soil, laboriously, masterfully tilled by human hands. The silver-tinted olive leaves, the stony foundations of the mountains breathe

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noiseless light; these walls protect from land-slips, defining on the rocks, vast plains sown with corn, planted with beans, potatoes, and cabbage—laid out with vines, and orange and lemon groves. How much wise, tenacious labour has been lavished here! The orange and yellow fruit also shines through the transparent silvery mist, adding to the earth a queer likeness to the sky blossoming with stars. One is led to think that the earth has been carefully ornamented by its labourers for a great feast and that after resting tonight, tomorrow, at sunset, they will rejoice and make merry.

“The silence is immutable. Everything on earth is so still, it would seem to have been chiselled by the hand of a great artist, cast in bronze and blue silver. The perfection of peace and beauty inspires one with solemn thoughts of the inexhaustible power of human labour, labour that creates all the miracles of our world; communicates to one the certitude that with time this triumphant force will compel even the soil of the extreme north to work for man twelve months of the year, will break it in, as it does animals. Joyfully and as the French say, reverently, one meditates upon man, the miracle worker, upon the splendid future which he is preparing for his sons.

“The stillness of this night, permitting the

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mind to rest from the various if paltry grievances of the day's work, seems to whisper to the soul a solemn music of the universal labour of great and small, a magnificent song of a new history—a song boldly raised by the working people of my country.

“Then all of a sudden, in the sensitive stillness resounds the dry knocking of an idiotic hammer—one, two, three, ten, twenty strokes and after them—as a splash of mud in clear transparent water, there comes with a crash, a wild whistle, screeches, rumbling, wailing, howling, the snorting of a metal pig, the cry of a donkey, the amorous quacking of a monstrous frog. All this insulting chaos of mad sounds is submitted to an imperceptible rhythm and after listening for one, two minutes to those wails, one begins unwillingly to imagine that this is an orchestra of maniacs, stricken with sexual mania and directed by a man-stallion who brandishes a huge genetic member.

“That is the radio—one of the greatest discoveries of science, one of the mysteries wrested by it from nature, hypocritically silent. It is the radio in a neighboring hotel, bringing consolation to a world grown gross, the world of birds of prey—transporting to them on air the tune of a new fot trot executed by a Negro orchestra. It is the music of grossness. To its rhythm in all

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the magnificent cabarets of a cultured continent, the degenerate, with cynical fluctuations of the hips, pollute, simulate, the fecundation of woman by man. . . .

“It is the evolution from the charm of a minuet and the passionate vitality of a waltz, to the cynicism of a fox trot with the convulsions of the Charleston; from Mozart and Beethoven to the jazz of the Negroes who undoubtedly laugh in their sleeves seeing how their white masters evolve towards a savagery which the Negroes of America are leaving behind them more and more rapidly. Culture is declining, cry those who would like to see prevail over the working man the prestige of grossness. The proletariat threatens to do away with culture! Its constituents cry and lie, for they cannot remain blind to the fact that it is the universal herd of the bestial which is trampling culture.

“The monstrous bass throws out English words; a wild horn wails piercingly, reminding one of the cries of a raving camel; a drum drones; a nasty little pig sizzles, tearing at one’s ears; the saxophone emits its quacking nasal sound. Swaying fleshy hips, thousands of heavy feet, tread and shuffle.

“The music of the degenerate ends finally with a deafening thud, as though a case of pottery had been flung from the skies to the earth. Again

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limpid stillness reigns around me and my thoughts return home.”

One might conclude that the depth of degradation of music had been plumbed in the discord and anarchy of noise reached by the prevalent jazz, but a still lower depth of hellish turmoil of explosive sound was unloosed when the talking movies appeared with their accompaniment of machine music.

I do not attack the jazz music and the dance on the grounds of bourgeois immorality. I leave that question for the specialists in morals. My detestation of the jazz music and dance arises from my hatred of ugliness; from my standpoint ugliness is sin; viewed in this way, the jazz dance is immoral. Then, the jazz music and the dance are degrading two of the noblest arts down to the lowest level of human ignorance, stupidity and obscenity.

It is the crowning achievement of the leveling program of Democracy—as Maxim Gorky has so well pointed out. The poets and artists of all time have found inspiration in love and the dance. Can artists or poets draw inspiration from a mass of hot, squirming, struggling, shuffling humanity as seen in the jazz dance?

CHAPTER VII

Biennial—An Impression

THE plan of the 1934 International Exposition at Venice is unique and original. The Italians are deserving of great credit for devising facilities for a study of the trends of contemporary art and to survey the present status of esthetic culture in the West.

This survey is simplified by segregating the art of each nation in a separate building, thus enabling the student to observe the painting and sculpture of any given race or nation without the confusion of contact with alien schools or vogues. This presents advantages for the study of contemporary art, superior to those offered by the Paris Salôn or the Royal Academy of London. It is fair, then, to assume that the Exposition presents a basis for judging the stage of esthetic culture arrived at by the nations represented, this of course depending on the assumption that each nation has here a truthful representation of the works of its ablest living artists.

In the case of two nations, France and the United States, I can say with certainty that

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their respective exhibits are not representative of the work of their best living artists.

In the American section this can be accounted for by the fact that it was controlled by the so-called Whitney Museum, a privately owned concern, having for its main object the propaganda and exploitation of modernistic art. Thus controlled, the works exhibited in the American building were limited to the private stock in trade of the Whitney Museum, placing this exhibit in the hands of female art faddists and modernistic art fanatics. This accounts in a great measure for the incredible mediocrity of the American exhibit. It is evident that the Venetian authorities were misinformed as to the status of the Whitney Museum as representing contemporary American art.

A glance at the catalogue will show an entire absence of the names of the artists who best represent the contemporary painting and sculpture in America. The names of George de Forest Brush, Eugene Savage, Edwin Blashfield, Wayman Adams, Harry Watrous and other American artists of ability are not to be found in the catalogue.

The French section is an exhibit of modernist art in which none of the representative artists of the "Salôn des Artistes Français" are represented.

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Certainly, if the management of the Biennial Exposition intended that only modernist art should be shown, then it was quite correct in excluding all academic painting and sculpture. But I understand that the International Exposition aimed at representative exhibit of contemporary art. Perhaps I am mistaken.

The impression one gains from a general tour of the exposition is the astounding sameness of the average paintings exhibited, indicating that the abandonment of the classic tradition of form and color left the modernists floundering in a slough of uniform depth and the mud of the same drabness. This condemns the artists so affected to a slavery of the mediocre, to an inevitable monotony much more tyrannical than the task imposed by the demands of the truths of nature and obedience to the right principles of drawing and design.

This dead level of mediocrity, the same pursuit of ugliness, the sterility of design and drawing does not vary in the modernist art output of different countries. This deadly sameness and monotony in the modernist art is fully exemplified in the International Exposition at Venice.

In contrast to this death-carrying monotony, compare the variety of the painting and sculp-

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ture of the Renaissance, the change from Rubens to Raphael, from Rembrandt to Titian, from Albrecht Dürer to Tintoretto and from Leonardo da Vinci to Velasquez or Franz Hals, and so on through all great art epochs.

But the work of all these masters was governed by the same principles that underlie all great art, the basic sense of form, truth to nature, proportion, creative richness of color, design and above all the pursuit of the ideal of beauty.

Now, modernist art is an absolute negation of all and each of the above attributes of great art.

In viewing the sections of the different nations represented in the Biennial Exposition, it is interesting to note the work of nations which can claim a tradition in the arts and observe the degree of their departure from their particular traditions of the Renaissance epoch. Of such nations, the Italians can claim first place with their Renaissance of the Greek classics, with Michael Angelo and Raphael.

Then the Belgian tradition with such ancestors as Rubens, Van Dyck, Jordaens and the primitives Memling and Van Eyck.

Then came Holland with Rembrandt, Franz Hals, Torbourg, Vermeer and Van der Helst.

The Spaniards with Velasquez, Ribera, Murillo and Goya.

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Compare the German section in the Biennial Exposition with the beautiful art of Dürer, Holbein, Schanngauer, Cranach and others of the Dürer school.

It should be very instructive for an Italian after a visit to the Museums of Florence, followed by a walk through the Academy in Venice, to visit the Italian section in the Biennial Exposition and ask himself the question, "Is this progress? Have we maintained the standard set by our tradition of the Renaissance"? And the Belgian traversing his section, after a trip to Antwerp or the Louvre, might put the query to himself, "Have we maintained the standard established for all time by Rubens and Van Dyck?"

The Hollander with visions of the Night Watch, the Supper at Emmaus or of Franz Hals at Haarlem, on passing through his section of the Biennial Exposition—what answer could he make to the question, "Have we maintained the standard of our tradition?"

The cultured Frenchman viewing his section could compare the paintings therein with the tradition formed by Clouet, continued by Fragonard, Watteau and Chardin and the brilliant nineteenth century of painters and sculptors.

The devotees of modernist art claim that it expresses present conditions and culture as did

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the art of the Renaissance. This is an absolutely false conclusion. There is still in the United States a remnant of enlightened and well grounded esthetic culture which is confused by the cloud of modernistic propaganda spread over the country by corrupt art critics working in the interest of picture dealers and the snobbery of a stupid and ignorant rich bourgeoisie.

The architecture of the Biennial Exposition presents a consummate negation of the classic tradition. In most of the buildings, the trend toward empty simplicity is pronounced, evidencing a complete surrender to the prevailing mode of formlessness, the abandonment of form for the formless, an entire absence of ornament.

After viewing the Palace of the Doges, or any Italian village, a glance at the architecture of the Biennial Exposition, will illustrate perfectly the stupid futility of modernistic art.

The impression one gets on viewing the Italian section is the expenditure of an enormous virility and talent to no purpose. If the Italians, with this virility and the talent they possess, would return loyally to their great tradition of the Renaissance, they could in a few years lead the world in artistic achievement, even as their great leader has led the world in constructive statesmanship. And what is the secret of Mussolini's success? Simply that he has resurrected the

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principles of Roman government and molded them to fit modern life—the truly classic tradition. Italian art must travel the same road to regain its ancient prestige.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

To forecast the future of esthetic culture in the United States with any degree of certainty is not possible in view of the present chaotic situation, with its race problems, the confusion of economic experiment, and its orgy of doctrinaires. The future in all directions is uncertain. However, a few suggestions may be permitted in conclusion.

Under whatever system we may find ourselves, after emerging from the tumult, there are three indispensable conditions that must be established before any real advance to a higher esthetic culture can be achieved in the United States.

First, the elimination of the imposture of modernistic art; this can only be done by educating the public to detect the false claims set forth by the propagandists of the New Deal in Art and informing the American people of the corrupt genesis of the modernist cult.

This enormous imposture, in order to function

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on the scale witnessed at present, must find an equally enormous gullibility, which could only exist in people almost universally ignorant of esthetics. A proof of the impotence of the educational system in our country is the failure to enlighten the people as to the truth in art, to strive for the truth in esthetics as the scientific schools strive for truth in science. This is one of the most important tasks facing educators in the United States. The second vital condition that must exist is the creation of a system of thorough technical discipline in the training of art students; that has always been the basis of the great schools of art in past times.

By discipline I mean sound drawing, which Ingres termed "the probity of art"; also the study of composition, of anatomy and perspective. That discipline is lacking in most of the art schools, resulting in the students being turned out half trained, especially in the matter of drawing. This is largely owing to the difficulty of finding teachers who can draw well enough to teach, for only the most capable artists can teach drawing.

The principal defect in American art is feeble drawing, a defective sense of form. This lack of thorough training in the art schools is encouraged by the widespread propaganda of the

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modernist art cult, which mobilizes an army of pseudo-art critics to flood the country with books, lectures, and almost the entire press, in a campaign to discredit thorough training in art schools. Every claim for sound drawing is greeted with the howl, "It is academic!"

To eliminate and supplant this cultural leprosy with a sound basis of discipline in the art schools is indispensable before there can be any real esthetic culture in America.

The third requirement for a background and basis, equally indispensable to any advance in esthetic culture, is that of an educated public, that is sufficiently cultured to recognize and respond to a true creative art. A culture that can discriminate between the work of dilettanti and bunglers and that of disciplined craftsmen. This status of culture does not at present exist in the United States. It can only be arrived at by an educational system superior to that which we now possess. To rescue us from the present political, economic and cultural chaos will call for superior leaders. Will they be forthcoming? Has the old native American fiber been so enfeebled by modern industrialism and Asiatic infiltration that the breed of Washington, Hamilton, Jackson and Lincoln have become extinct?

This is a question only time can solve.

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Walt Whitman, who sensed so many of our imperious needs, chanted these lines:—

“Laws for Creations,
For strong artists and leaders—for fresh
broods of teachers, and perfect literats
for America,
For diverse savants, and coming musicians.



MEPHISTOPHELES MEETS HIS IDEAL OF BEAUTY

THE GOSPEL OF UGLINESS

According to

MEPHISTOPHELES

The pursuit of ugliness is the
last refuge of the Impotent.—

THE readers of the "Art World" * may ask why I have chosen this channel of communication to the public instead of one of the publications devoted to my propaganda of degenerate art.

* This paper originally appeared in the periodical "The Art World" of March, 1917, and, at the risk of some repetition, I include it here.—J. H. F.

THE GOSPEL OF UGLINESS

You probably know that I am an aristocrat. Formerly I moved in the highest circles and was entitled to a seat at the council of the Gods. As the result of a misunderstanding I was eliminated from the council. Owing to my former associations I prefer good society, not always attainable among my propagandists. In fact I must confess to a certain measure of loathing for the unclean instruments I have therefore employed.

Confiding in you, I will say that in this talk on art I am telling you the truth—impossible as it may seem! I can tell the truth when it suits my purpose. Of course I am known as the greatest liar in the universe, having been named “Father of Lies.” Consequently, when I wish to impress the people in a way opposite to the truth, I tell them the truth.

Many years ago there lived and sang in Germany a troubadour named Goethe. That was before Germany became obsessed with science. There were poets and musicians who sang of Loreleis and Rhine maidens and of a hero called Siegfried. This troubadour became interested in one of my adventures and wove it into a song quite as notable in some ways as Homer’s story of Ulysses. This adventure was my journey with Faust. As the story runs, one eventful evening I appeared to Faust as a

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traveling scholar. He asked that I explain myself. I answered thus:

I am the spirit that denies
And justly so: for all things from the Void
Called forth, deserve to be destroyed.
'Twere better, then, were naught created.
Thus, all which you as Sin have rated—
Destruction—ought with evil blent—
That is my proper element.

This is my creed and expresses in a concrete form my philosophy.

In my negation of the material world and my aversion to beauty and my worship of ugliness I move within a closed circle to a point of contact with Buddha and Saint Francis. Note also that my chant expresses a sinister pessimism, which is one of my characteristics. Indeed, it were better that the human brood were never created than to be forever building card-houses to be knocked down, as they did recently in Europe. However, as it is not possible to extinguish the race, I will aim to destroy the one thing that more than all else makes life attractive and worth living on this planet. I will negate beauty and establish the gospel of ugliness.

As the supreme exponent of negation I can only exist through opposition to the divine order

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of truth and beauty. Therefore I will exercise all my powers to disturb the cosmic harmony. In past time my efforts to involve the world in total discord have failed, but at present, for the first time in history, I have almost arrived at a complete realization of my cherished ideals in the destruction of life and art—the world-wide negation of beauty and consequent worship of ugliness.

I am minded to transport myself to a peak in the Alps, and viewing therefrom the slaughter and ruin of the nations, congratulate myself with a fiendish chuckle on my triumph over the three grand obsessions of the human race: religion, philosophy and science. In fact never before have I felt so powerful and so encouraged to press on to the attainment of absolute negation. I no longer masquerade as scholar, professor, or priest, but stride over the world as Utilitarianism in the fair land of Europe, with war and famine, and in America with greed and Stygian ugliness. Thus, denying the cosmic trend toward beauty, I advance toward the ideal ugliness.

You mortals are on the wrong track; in the past you have looked for salvation to transcendentalism and philosophy, and now you look to science. All three have failed you. But there is a certain cult which you have never fairly tried, at least not in modern times—the Cult of Beauty.

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Being a generous devil and feeling measurably sure of success, I will amuse myself by telling you the secret of this cult, knowing perfectly well that you will not believe a word that I say. What I refer to is: the ideal of beauty, which is the basic volition of your cosmos or God.

Every object of material growth in the universe is perfect and beautiful in its varying scale of development—unless mutilated or disorganized by some of the powers I employ to negate the divine order. The most elementary forms of life, dragged up from the bottom of the sea, are quickened through the Cosmic Volition toward beauty into balanced masses and rhythmic lines, and this volition continues in its ceaseless quest for beauty throughout the entire scale of creation upward to man.

The cosmic urge toward the ideal of beauty is the voice of your God, uttering itself through matter in a definite trend or stream of tendency. And this is the one trend or stream of tendency throughout the kingdom of nature that you can prove to exist by actual demonstration—without any resort whatsoever to religion, philosophy or science. Such a demonstration forms also an impregnable standard of beauty. For all normal products of the creative mind are based upon

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the laws of proportion, rhythm and equilibrium, rising in their quality of beauty in the ratio that they involve these fundamental laws.

Also, this cult of the ideal beauty would furnish you with a workable definition of Morals, which you do not possess at the present time. That which makes for a realization of this ideal is moral, whatever presents an obstacle to its attainment is immoral.

Whenever I employ the agencies of negation, such as disease or violence, to disturb the normal development of nature, its character is at once changed to abnormal. The balanced masses become unbalanced, their proportion and rhythm at once become disorganized. Instead of beauty and harmony there is discord and ugliness. Witness my cult of modernistic art.

You may ask why this element of negation is always present. I will tell you. It means conflict, without which the universe would sink into the stagnation of monotony, which is death. Life means perpetual conflict with death. Whenever one of my agencies of negation disturbs the normal creative volition, whether in a human being or in a painting, it means death. My mission is to create disorder, and as Ruskin truly says, "Death is the consummation of disorder."

As the supreme Spirit of Negation, I am at

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perpetual war with the creative cosmos. I win victories, but I do not win the war.

The pestilent Greeks, with their ideal of beauty, have given me more trouble than all the other races of mankind. Their ideal will not down. Roman brutality and materialism were to some extent leavened by this ideal and it almost triumphed; but my importation of Oriental luxury and religion, together with the stagnation induced by ill-used wealth, paralyzed the Greek cult in Rome and destroyed it.

The breaking up of the Roman Empire completed what I thought to be a permanent success for my program, but I discerned signs of a revival of the Greek cult which might have developed into an organized power to build a new civilization on the ruins of Rome.

Fortunately this menace to my plans was averted by the world becoming obsessed by progressive transcendentalism—with its consciousness of guilt. This consciousness of guilt, in the transcendental ascetic, is born of a belief that his spirit is imprisoned in the flesh—first physically and further mentally—by everything that makes the material world attractive. Therefore his first duty is to resist and deny the natural world. Buddha taught his disciples “that all beings were entangled in a web of passions; tossed upon the raging billows of a sea of ever-renewing exist-

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ences; whirling in a vortex of endless miseries; tormented incessantly by the stings of concupiscence; sunk in a dark abyss of ignorance; the wretched victims of an illusory, unsubstantial and unreal world."

And he further says "that sentient existence is attached to matter. Matter is attached to moral evil. Moral evil is a thing to be extinguished. Therefore sentient existence is a thing to be extinguished."

Thus, according to the Buddhist ascetic, a man can only liberate his soul by purging himself of all desire for existence, on the material plane.

To do this, the first step is a negation of beauty; for beauty, aside from the instinct for procreation, is the most powerful element of attraction in the material world. Thus the excessive transcendentalist finds his salvation in ugliness. The Hindoo fanatic mutilates himself on a bed of spikes and the Christian ascetic flagellates himself to purge away all desire for material existence. Both are tortured by a consciousness of the guilt and shame of souls held captive in the flesh by their original sin. To the transcendental ascetic removal from all contact with matter is the ultimate hope. The very body itself becomes an object of disgust.

Buddha lost no opportunity to despise the body. He taught his disciples in the Buddhist

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scriptures: to despise the body, to regard it as a mere illusion, without reality and subject to destruction; not only that it was like foam on the ocean and like a flame trembling in the wind, but that it was a mere receptacle of filth, a worm bred upon the dunghill full of disgusting secretions, a drain filled with offensive refuse, producing all kinds of pains and diseases, and being nothing but a cause for dissatisfaction and aversion. Therefore the uglier and more repulsive a human being, the more his aversion to the material life and the consequent impulse toward Nirvana.

My object then is to create in the human being my first form of Negation: An aversion to his own kind. This object is perfectly attained the moment the human being, through his environments, costumes and the destruction of health, becomes ugly.

It is not possible at this period to hypnotize western men and women to the extent of making them mutilate themselves like the Hindoos or the early Christians, but I have prompted them to attain the acme of ugliness in their dress, combined with an intense monotony and commonplaceness of their daily lives, to the extent that they regard the Greek Hermes as on an exact

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level, so far as actual appearance goes, with a degenerate cabaret dancer on Broadway.

The French Revolution with its worship of philosophy and the doctrine of "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" worked this change, and here we have the strange spectacle of a philosophy denying the whole fabric of revealed religion, meeting on a common ground the very transcendentalism it denies.

The patriots of the French Revolution invented the present costume, which is a perfect corollary of scientific industrialism. Thus they unwittingly, urged on by me, inaugurated the greatest cycle of negation of beauty in the world's history.

I pride myself that transcendental obsession, in its different forms of excessivism, is my greatest achievement in my efforts to enslave and ruin the human race. So long as I can induce men and women to occupy themselves about the many varieties of occultism, spiritualism and transcendental speculation about the future, so long will they neglect the problems of the present and leave them unsolved. They stumble along and fall into the ditch I have dugged for them, when the secret of the magic of the only true occultism lies open before them. The Greeks arrived at the only true occultism in their ideal of Beauty. There is more true occult-

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ism in the Venus de Milo or the Jupiter Otricoli than in all the seated Buddhas and sculptured saints in the round world. There is more expression of the real soul of the universe in the ruins of the Parthenon than in all other architecture in existence, for in the Parthenon, and not in the Pyramids, is buried the secret of the universe, the solution of the Sphinx's riddle, the secret of the healing of the nations through beauty, through harmony and peace without monotony.

The second gruesome power in my sinister triad is the negation of—the commonplace. Here I enter the domain of comedy! I crack jokes with Bottom and Snug-the-Joiner, and whistle a roundelay with Marsyas, giving all hail to these jolly folk. At last they have come to their own.

In America my cult of the commonplace has, for the first time in history, attained the absolute. To some extent this is owing to my not being hampered by the historic environments and traditions of the old world, but chiefly to the immolation of the people on Scientific Industrialism which, besides creating an environment of extreme ugliness, offers such rewards in material wealth and power that it seduces the best minds away from the arts, and so leaves painting and sculpture and art criticism and poetry, with some noticeable exceptions, to the mentally

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more deficient of the race. Scientific Industrialism with its monstrous environment induces a mechanical volition that passes for existence. From the resultant inferno of monotony you attempt to escape by invoking the jugglery of science to produce electric vaudeville, canned music and mental debaucheries in moving picture shows.

In the country your landscapes are polluted with a ghastly array of sign boards, proclaiming in strident color and line the glory of quack medicines and department stores. In the towns the windows contain posters. Every vacant space on walls or fence is covered with hideous pictorial abortions summoning people to spend money. The Elevated Railway and Subway stations are filled with figures of gigantic size wrestling in the throes of rheumatism or cholera morbus, or infants of elephantine proportions reaching for the baby food. Inside the cars are rows of advertising signs in violent tones and harsh contrasts, the hard line and flint-edged letters harassing your nerves like a knife thrust.

When night falls other horrors are forthcoming. When you enter Broadway at Columbus Circle you might well exclaim with Dante when he traversed my Inferno: "The banners of Hell's Monarch do come forth toward me." Flung out on the sable curtain of the night are

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gouts and jets of electric flame gashing and seaming the sky with frantic vociferations. The elemental forces evoked in the service of Mammon issue in symbols of noise, that with strident discord, summon the four corners of the globe to the traffic in whiskey, chorus girls and automobiles.

You see then how the reign of science has become one of my chief powers in creating an environment of negation. I attach the greatest importance to the effect of environment, especially on the minds of young people and children. One of my pet hobbies is the colored sheets in the Sunday supplements. These contain the very acme of a hideous negation of form and color, combined with a low vulgarity and degradation of the English language. The effect of these villainous illustrations and the accompanying slang on the minds of young children is far-reaching and permanent, and prepare their receptive minds for another phase of my propaganda later on.

Another feature that pleases me is that on the adjoining pages of the Sunday newspapers may be found columns of emasculated homilies about morality, efficiency and fervid exhortations to temperance. Such influences as I have indicated also have a baleful prenatal effect on the unborn children, in an ever-increasing ratio in succeeding

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generations, resulting in a subconscious negation of form and color that is obviously reflected in some of the current exhibitions of painting and sculpture.

Taken as a whole, the salient characteristics of many of the art exhibitions is that they are stupid and ugly. But my cult of the commonplace and ugly has so lowered your standard of art that shoals of mediocre minds have taken up painting and sculpture—many of them of the mental caliber of unskilled laborers, without the intelligence to become skilled mechanics, electricians or engineers. They might be useful in the avocations of simple labor as dish-washers and ditch-diggers, but they have turned to the arts with exactly the same results that followed the efforts of the players before Theseus in “The Midsummer Night’s Dream”—with the difference that Starveling and Snug and Bottom were taken as a huge joke by Theseus and his court, whereas the present Starvelings and Snugs and Bottoms are taken seriously and almost dominate the whole fabric of esthetics in America.

Then I have reversed the old Greek fable of Marsyas—Marsyas, a relative of mine, an uncouth, commonplace satyr who attempted to compete in poetry with Apollo, the God of Art and Light. Being vanquished, Marsyas was condemned by Apollo to be flayed alive for his

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impudence and failure, notwithstanding the verdict of the jury in the favor of Marsyas.

At present you will note the complete reversal of the ancient fable. Marsyas now flays Apollo. Marsyas has come into his own; in fact, some of the current art exhibits on Fifth Avenue might aptly be termed "The Revenge of Marsyas."

The third form of my triad of Negations is to be found in the peculiar manifestation of the "modernistic" neurotic cult of art expressed through the medium of sculpture, painting and poetry. My partiality for this special cult is the proof of my esthetic taste. Its propaganda has steadily developed since the days of my pupil, the Marquis de Sade, who was the prophet of the cult. I have seen it grow in Paris, spread to London, Berlin and other centers of taste and culture in Europe, and I am encouraged to believe that my cult of degenerate art has now a firm foothold in America.

You may observe that the French have been the torch bearers in esthetic culture in modern times. What the Greeks were in the fifth century before Christ and the Italians in the sixteenth century, the French were in the nineteenth century. They possess the plastic instinct or sense of form in a much higher degree than any other modern race. They were the leaders and teachers of nations in esthetic ideals. I

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pride myself, it is no small triumph, that with the aid of alien degenerates I have hatched my cult of modernism on this modern altar of the Temple of Art.

After the war of 1870 the French nation in the seventies and eighties developed a cycle of art equal in splendor of achievement to the Italian Renaissance in both sculpture and painting. But during that time, in subterranean ways, my propaganda went on. Step by step I have gained, to the extent that now in the capitals of Europe and America my modernistic cult is organized. The nature of my propaganda is put forth in editions de luxe and my pamphlets and art dodgers have reached America. Sexual neurosis or perversion has existed in all historical periods, but the present is the first time in history that it developed an organized cult in letters and the plastic arts. My devotees of this cult all agree on one point, irrespective of their different trends: they all unite by unanimous consent in a common worship of ugliness. Their test or standard of highest excellence in art is to achieve the intensest possible negation of form and proportion, and the greatest conceivable ugliness, coupled with symbolic suggestions of sexomania in pictures, statuary or alleged poetry. There is a well-defined cabalistic code of sign language

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employed, whereby initiates can understand and experience the sensations conveyed.

It is well understood by alienists that many people who have an insane diathesis may live and die normally, if during their lifetime no specific condition arises that fans the latent spark of insanity into flame. The same may be said of those who have a dormant tendency toward sex perversion and sadism. Ordinarily the police prevent developments of conditions favorable to this tendency, but the degenerates have seized upon the arts as a medium for the expression of their peculiar mania; instead of making indecent exposures in public parks and thereby receiving a term in the penitentiary, they effect their purpose by exhibiting their art works in the public art galleries and in alleged poetry—and are lauded and eulogized by some of the art critics in the capitals of Europe and America. The effect of these exhibitions upon the youth of the country may well be imagined. Through the public exhibitions of their unclean symbols the degenerates present the conditions for spreading their cult among the young of both sexes.

The stigmata of degeneracy in modernistic art are most easily detected in the treatment of the nude. The nude human figure, wrought to a fine design with plastic power, marks the highest

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achievement in art. Likewise the blasphemous degradation of the nude figure seen in the abominations perpetrated by European and American degenerates, marks the lowest stage of impotence and debasement in the arts.

The foundation of any right existence of esthetic culture must rest upon a basis of correct appreciation of the power and beauty of the nude human figure. The public exhibitions of the atrocious and vulgar travesties of the nude by modernistic art degenerates of Europe can only create disgust and loathing in the minds of normal people and so operate to repel and prevent the advance of correct esthetic taste, thus playing directly into the hands of prudery and Puritanism.

The unfortunate victims of pathological sex-perversion can also be known by their preferences in art. In addition to their partiality for the neurotic cults they affect a taste for rude carvings of aboriginal races, especially if they suggest a certain obscene symbolism, united with a strain of devil-worship. They are fascinated by the union of the demoniacal and the obscene, which is one of my salient characteristics—as indicated in the account of my journey through the classic Walpurgis Night with Faust.

In the success of my modern propaganda of degeneracy in the capitals of Europe and Amer-

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ica I owe much to the newspapers. In the days of Baudelaire and Verlaine a large number of people read books of poetry and philosophy. Now all that is changed. Most of the people read only the daily papers. In many of these my agents of propaganda operate disguised as art critics, eulogizing the works and exhibits of neurotic art. It has been observed in Berlin, Paris and New York that some of these critics are possessed of a sinister pessimism akin to my own.

This is often allied to a pathological diathesis towards sex-perversion. Consequently there is a voluntary response by these desperadoes of morbid sexomania to the works of sex perverts. These writers on art affect a strident clamor for modernistic art. They have, thanks to my prompting, gained a foothold in Paris, London and American cities. I am quite certain that there are art dealers who have been converted to my ideals and you will now see exhibitions on Fifth Avenue that will vie with those of Paris and London in presenting to your people, both young and old, examples of the symbolism of my cult of indecency.

Observers of some of the exhibitions of degenerate art have remarked on the peculiar character of many of the people who haunt such exhibitions. Also the effect of the pictures and

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statues on the young and old of both sexes—the subtle effect of the unclean symbols on some receptive minds, of a first sensation that digs deep into the secret recesses of the soul, releasing therefrom some atavic monster that otherwise would have slept on unaroused.

You see I pursue my ideal through all the changes of the world's panorama, using my powers of negation to foil the plan of the cosmic volition. I would reduce the world to the condition of the Witches' Walpurgis Night on the Brocken, when I revealed to Faust my ideal of the ugly, the vulgar and the abominable, like the witches' dance in *Tam O'Shanter*: the shapes arose of murder, disease, abortion and suffering. I was here in my element and reigned supreme in my kingdom of negation.

But according to my compact with Faust, I had to go with him through the classic Walpurgis Night wherein I was to be tortured by the vision of the Greek ideal beauty. As we moved on, the forms of ancient art were revealed, through which Faust advanced toward his ideal beauty and I toward my ideal ugliness. In the archaic art of the Egyptians and the Assyrians and the primitive art of Greece, with its griffins and centaurs, Faust discerned the struggle of art to rise from the animal to the human form, giving a prophecy

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of the future ideal beauty. He was exalted and stimulated to pursue this ideal.

On myself, who was forced by my compact to journey with him through these realms of the antique, the effect was exactly the reverse. I saw in the part-bestial forms of the sphinxes and griffins a beginning of the realization of my ideal of ugliness and experienced a partial relief from the agony of contemplating the pure Greek forms; and I soliloquized thus:

And as among these fires I wander, aimless,
I find myself so strange, so disconcerted:
Quite naked most, a few are only shirted—
The Griffins insolent, the Sphinxes shame-
less.

And what not all, with pinions and with
tresses,

Before, behind, upon one's eyesight presses!
Indecency, 'tis true, is our ideal,
But the antique is too alive and real.
One must with modern thought the thing
bemaster,

And in the fashion variously o'erplaster:
Disgusting race! Yet I, perforce, must
meet them

And as new guest with due decorum greet
them.

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As we moved on through the world of antique art each one found something to his taste. Then we came to a most amazing revelation of the power of the Greek imagination. As we advanced, Faust toward his ideal of beauty, I toward my ideal of ugliness, we came to the Sirens with their sharp talons. We saw Lilith, the female vampire of the Hebrews; the Lamiae, the witches of the Greek imagination; Empusa, the cannibal witch with one cloven foot who called me cousin. I acknowledged the relationship and admired her deformity. We passed other entities symbolic of nature and the elements, and finally arrived at the place of the Phorkyads, of the three grey sisters. They each one had in common but one eye and one tooth, which they used alternately. They dwelt at the uttermost ends of the earth where neither sun nor moon beheld them. They represent the climax of all which the Greek imagination has created of the horrible and repulsive. I was consequently ravished with delight. I had found the ideal ugliness.

As I, myself the embodiment of ugliness, stood before these daughters of chaos, I broke into song:

. . . I something see and am dumbfounded!
Proud as I am, I must confess the truth:

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I've never seen their like insooth—
Worse than our hags, an Ugliness un-
bounded!
How can the deadly Sins then ever be
Found ugly in the least degree,
When one this triple dread shall see?
We would not suffer them to dwell
Even at the dreariest door of hell;
They stir, they seem to scent my coming;
Like vampire-bats, they're squeaking, twit-
tering, humming.

I then addressed them:

Most honored Dame! Approaching, by
your leave,
Grant that your triple blessing I receive.
I come, though still unknown, yet, be it
stated,
If I mistake not, distantly related.
Old, reverend Gods already did I see;
To Ops and Rhea have I bowed the knee;
The Parcae even—your sisters—yesterday
Or day before, they came across my way;
And yet the like of you ne'er met my sight:
Silent am I, and ravished with delight.
I am amazed no poet has the sense
To sing your praises!—Say, how can it be
That we no pictures of your beauty see?

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Should not through you, the chisel strive to
wean us
From shapes like those of Juno, Pallas,
Venus?

My prayer has been answered by the modernistic degenerates in Art.

The astounding revelation to me was the range of the Greek mind invoking the absolute in the two opposite poles of the ideals of beauty and ugliness. I who had striven with all my powers and that of the fallen angels for the ideal of ugliness was now confronted with a creation that eclipsed our utmost efforts. Here in the remotest ends of the earth, in eternal blackness of darkness, the Greek imagination placed the symbol of absolute negation, even as they had approached the ideal of absolute beauty, thus reaching the limit of the two opposite powers.

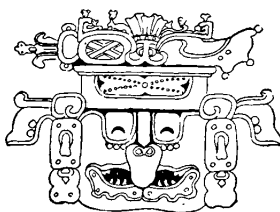
But they kept their ideal of ugliness chained in perpetual darkness. No expression in their art ever betrayed its existence, but this monster of negation stood on the threshold of every Greek imagination. Jupiter, Apollo and the Venus de Milo had gazed into the horror of it—on all the faces of their Gods and Heroes there is a trace of the haunting terror of that contact. You cannot imagine one of those visages of di-

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vine beauty breaking into a smile. With unfathomable, eternal repose they register their condemnation of ugliness and the triumph of their ideal beauty.

MEPHISTO.

THE END



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